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1818

SACRED
BIOGRAPHY:

OR THE
HISTORY OF THE
PATRIARCHS.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,
THE HISTORY OF
DEBORAH, RUTH, AND HANNAH.

BEING
A COURSE OF LECTURES

DELIVERED AT THE SCOTTS CHURCH, LONDON WALL.

BY HENRY HUNTER, D. D.

THE THIRD AMERICAN EDITION.

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VOL. II.

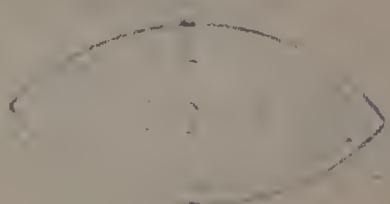
Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.—*John* viii. 58.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.—*Revelation* i. 8.

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Luke xx. 27, 38.—Then came to him certain of the Sadducees (which deny that there is any resurrection) and they asked him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. There were therefore seven brethren; and the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering, said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage. But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage. Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.

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Psalm xci. 5, 8.—Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, and see the reward of the wicked.

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and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

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LECTURE I.

Then came to him certain of the Sadducees (which deny that there is any resurrection) and they asked him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. There were therefore seven brethren. and the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also. And they left no children, and died. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection, whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage. Neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.—LUKE XX. 27—38.

ONE of the most obvious and natural consolations of reason, under the loss of those whom we dearly loved, and one of the most abundant consolations fur-

nished by religion, is the belief that our departed friends, are, at their death, disposed of infinitely to their advantage. We weep and mourn while we reflect upon the deprivation of comfort which we have sustained; but we wipe the tears of sorrow from our eyes, when we consider that our loss is their unspeakable gain. “Rachel weeping for her children,” refuses to be comforted so long as she thinks “they are not;” but her soul is tranquilized and comforted when her eyes, in faith, look within the veil, and behold them softly and securely reposing in the bosom of their Father and God. It is an humbling and mortifying employment to visit churchyards, to step from grave to grave, to recal the memory while we trample upon the ashes of the young, the beautiful, the wise and the good; but we find immediate relief, we rise into joy, we tread among the stars, when aided by religion, we transport ourselves in thought to those blessed regions where all the faithful live, and reign, and rejoice; where “they that be wise shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever,” Dan. xii. 3. Distance is then swallowed up and lost, and we mingle in the noble employments and pure delights of the blessed immortals who encircle the throne of God.

It is astonishing to think, that there should have been men disposed willingly to deprive themselves of this glorious source of comfort; men ready to resign the high prerogative of their birthright, and by a species of humility strange and unnatural, spontaneously degrading themselves to the level of the brutes that perish. And yet there have been in truth such men in every age. But it is no wonder to find those who satisfy themselves with the pursuits and enjoyments of a mere beastly nature while they live, contented to lie down with the beasts in death, to rise no more. They first make it their interest that there should be no here-

after, and then they fondly persuade themselves that there shall be none.

Error of every kind, both in faith and morals, prevailed in the extreme, at the period when and in the country where the Saviour of the world appeared for our redemption. The nation of the Jews was divided, in respect of moral and religious sentiment, into two great sects or parties, who both pretended to found their opinions upon the authority of the inspired books, which were held in universal estimation among them; and particularly the writings of Moses. But they drew conclusions directly opposite from the same facts and doctrines; and both deviated, in the grossest manner, from the spirit and design of that precious record which they both affected to hold in the highest veneration.

The Pharisees, earnestly contending for the strict observance of the law, confined their attention to its minuter and less important objects, and paid "the tithe of mint and anise and cummin," but omitted "the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith:" and, raising oral tradition to the rank and dignity of scripture, found a pretence for dispensing with the plainest and most essential obligations of morality, when these contradicted their interests and opinions. Heinously offended at the neglect of washing hands previous to eating, they were wicked enough to establish, by a law of their own, neglect of, unkindness and disobedience to parents; thus, according to the just censure which our Lord passed upon them, "straining at a gnat, and swallowing a camel."

The Sadducees, on the other hand, the strong spirits of the age, disdaining the restraints imposed on mankind by a written law, thought fit to become a law unto themselves. They left the austerities of a strict religion and morality to vulgar minds; and, that they might procure peace to themselves in the enjoyment of those sinful pleasures to which they were addicted,

they denied the existence of spirit, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of retribution. They alleged that the law was silent on those points, and that this silence was a sufficient reason for rejecting the belief of them. They went farther, and contended, that were such doctrines contained in the law, they ought not to be admitted, because they implied a contradiction, or at least involved such a number of difficulties as it was impossible satisfactorily to solve. The chief of those difficulties they propose to our blessed Saviour in the passage which I have read; and they do this, not in the spirit of docility and diffidence, to have it removed, but in the pride of their hearts, vainly taking for granted that it was insurmountable.

My principal intension in leading your thoughts to this subject at this time, is the occasion which it afforded to the great Teacher who came from God, of discoursing on a theme nearly connected with the design of these Lectures; and of disclosing to us sundry important particulars, respecting the venerable men whose lives we have been studying, and those which we are still to examine; and respecting that world in which we, together with them, have a concern so deeply, because eternally, interesting. To these we shall be led by making a few cursory remarks on the preceding conversation which took place between Christ and the Sadducees. And this shall serve as an Introduction to the farther continuation of a Course of Lectures on the history of the memorable persons and events presented to us in the holy scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments.

The Sadducees insidiously begin their attack by professing the highest respect for the authority of Moses and of his writings: "Master, Moses wrote unto us." The most pernicious designs, the most malevolent purposes, are frequently found to clothe themselves in smiles; often while mischief lies brooding in men's hearts, "their words are smoother than oil." The

father of lies himself can have recourse to truth if it be likely to serve his turn; and the enemy of all goodness will condescend to quote that scripture which he hates, if it can help him to an argument for the occasion. With this affected deference for Moses, the Sadducees are aiming at the total subversion of every moral and religious principle, by weakening one of the strongest motives to virtue, and undermining the surest foundation of hope and joy to man. They alledge, that obedience to the law might eventually lead to much confusion and disorder; and they suppose a situation, for none such ever existed, in which compliance with the revealed will of God in this world would infallibly lead to discord and distress in that which is to come. In this we have an example of a very common case; that of men straining their eyes to contemplate objects at a great distance, or totally out of sight, and wilfully neglecting or overlooking those which are immediately before them: troubling themselves about effects and consequences of which they are ignorant, and over which they have no power, while they are regardless of obvious truth and commanded duty, though these are their immediate business and concern. The Sadducees, in order to cloak their licentiousness and infidelity, affect solicitude about the regularity and peace of a future state, which in words they denied, if they did not from the heart disbelieve.

I make but one remark more before I proceed to our Lord's reply. Eagerness and anxiety to bring forward and to establish an opinion, betray an inward doubt or disbelief of it. Truth is not ever proclaiming itself from the house-tops, is not forward to obtrude itself upon every occasion, but is satisfied with maintaining and defending itself when assaulted; but falsehood is eternally striving to conceal or strengthen its conscious weakness by a parade of words, and a show of reason. The zeal of the Sadducees to explode and run down

the doctrine of the resurrection, plainly betrays a secret dread and belief of it.

Our Lord, in his answer, points out directly the source of all error and infidelity, "ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, and the power of God." Not knowing the scriptures, ye suppose a doctrine is not in them, because ye have not found it there: because ye have wilfully shut your own eyes, ye vainly imagine there is no light in the sun; and take upon you to affirm there is none. Not knowing the power of God, you call that impossible which you cannot do, deem that absurd which you do not comprehend, and pronounce that false which you wish to be so. The whole force of the objection to the truth of the resurrection, goes upon the supposition, that the future world is to be exactly constituted as the present; that the relations and distinctions which subsist among men upon earth, are to subsist in the kingdom of heaven. But the supposition is founded in ignorance and falsehood; and, the moment it is denied, the mighty argument built upon it falls to the ground. "In the resurrection," says Christ, "they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."

In these words, the condition of men in the world to come, is described, first, negatively, "they neither marry, nor are given in marriage." The power which created the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, might undoubtedly, had it pleased him, have created the whole human race at once, as easily as he formed the first of men, Adam, and as easily as he rears up one generation of men after another, in the course of providence. But, thinking it meet to people the earth by multiplying mankind gradually upon it, difference of sex and the institution of marriage were the means which he was pleased to employ. In the resurrection, the number of the redeemed being complete at once, that difference, and that institution, being unnecessary, shall be done away. Our Saviour

adds, "neither can they die any more." Death, too, enters into the plan of Providence for the government of this world. Men must be removed, to make room for men. But because this sphere is narrow and contracted, and unable to contain and support the increasing multitudes of many generations, is the Lord's hand shortened, that he cannot expand a more spacious firmament, and compact a more spacious globe, to contain, at once, the countless nations of them that are saved? O how greatly do men err; not knowing the power of God! Death is no part of the plan of Providence for the government of that world of bliss. In our Father's house above there are *many* mansions; there is bread enough, and to spare; there is room for all; provision for all: the father need not to die, to give space to the son, nor the mother to spare, that the child may have enough. For they are "as the angels of God," says our Lord, according to Matthew, "equal to the angels," says our evangelist, "and are children of God."

This describes their happiness positively. Men on earth "see in a glass darkly; know in part, prophecy in part," are encompassed with infirmity; but the "angels in heaven" excel in strength, stand before the throne of God, serve him day and night in his temple, without wearying, see face to face, know as they are known." Their number is completed, their intercourse is pure and perfect, without the means of increase and union which exist here below.

Having thus reproved their ignorance and presumption, respecting the "power of God," our Lord proceeds to expose their ignorance respecting "the scriptures," and produces a passage from Moses, in whom they trusted, which they had hitherto overlooked or misunderstood, wherein the doctrine in dispute was clearly laid down; and which we had principally in view in leading your attention to this passage on the present occasion.

The passage quoted, is that noted declaration of

God to Moses, from the midst of the burning bush, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," *Exod. iii. 6*. That God should have condescended to hold this language concerning Enoch, "who was translated that he should not see death," had been less wonderful; for that holy man, who walked with God upon earth, was exalted immediately to a more intimate union with God in heaven. But to speak thus of men who were long ago mouldered into dust, of whom nothing remained among men but their names, conveys an idea of human existence, before which the life of a Methuselah dwindles into nothing, an idea which swallows up mortality, and gives a dignity and a duration to man that bids defiance to the grave. That God should say to Abraham, while he lived, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward," *Gen. xv. 1*—was a miracle of grace and condescension; but to speak thus, more than three centuries after he had been consigned to the tomb, "I am the God of Abraham," this exhibits a relation between God and the faithful, which perfectly reconciles the mind to the thoughts of dissolution. Indeed it is impossible to conceive any thing more elevating, any thing more tranquilizing to the soul, than the view of future bliss with which the text presents us. And this tranquillity and elevation are greatly heightened by the consideration, that Jehovah, from the midst of flaming fire, under the Old Testament dispensation, and Jehovah, in the person of the great Redeemer, under the New, taught the same glorious truth to the world. And what is it? "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

When God was pleased to express his favourable regard to Abraham upon earth, what did it amount to? He led him through a particular district of land, in the length and the breadth of it, and said "I will give it thee." But Abraham now expatiates through a more

ample region, and contemplates a fairer inheritance, an inheritance his own, not in hope, but in possession. Abraham, though following the leading of Divine Providence, saw the Redeemer's day only afar off: but, in virtue of his relation to God, he has now beheld the dawning of the morning expanded into the pure light of the perfect day. He once felt the events which affected his family, with the emotion natural to a man; he has since beheld them extending their influence to nations which he thought not of; and he now looks forward in holy rapture, to that period when he, and his Isaac, and an earthly Canaan, and every thing of a temporal and transitory nature, shall bring their glory and their honour, and lay all at the feet of "Him, who sitteth upon the throne, and before the Lamb."

From Abraham *we* are removed to a distance of time and place, in which thought is lost, and we seem to have no more interest in him than if he had never existed. But the doctrine of the text brings us so close to him, that we recognise the friend of God, in the midst of myriads of saints in glory; we converse with him, and continue to be instructed by him.

The dust of Abraham sleeps unnoticed and forgotten in the cave of Machpelah; but lift up thine eyes, and behold Abraham on high, and Lazarus in his bosom; his spirit united to God "the Father of spirits," and to all "the spirits of just men made perfect." "And even that dust" also "rests in hope:" It shall not always be left in the place of the dead; it shall not remain forever a prey to corruption. Abraham purchased a tomb, and buried his Sarah out of his sight; but he has overtaken, regained her, in the regions of eternal day, where virtuous and believing friends meet, never more to be disjoined. Abraham received his Isaac from the wonder-working hand of Heaven, when nature was dead to hope; at the command of God he cheerfully surrendered him again, and devoted him

upon the altar: again he receives him to newness of life, and that darling son lives to put his hand upon his eyes. But they were not long disunited; the son has overtaken the parents; they rejoice in God, and in one another; they are the children and heirs of the resurrection; "they are as the angels of God in heaven."

"I am the God of Isaac." This Isaac, the heir of Abraham's possessions, of his faith, and of his virtues, was, on earth, united to the God of the spirits of all flesh, by many tender and important relations: by piety, by filial confidence, by goodness, by patience and submission, on his part; by election, by special favour, by highness of destination, on the part of his heavenly Father. Yet these distinguished advantages exempted him not from the stroke of affliction. Many years did this heir of the promises, this chosen seed, "in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed," many years did he go childless. Early in life was he visited with the loss of sight, and thereby exposed to much mortification and dejection of spirit. Children are at length given him, and they prove the torment of his life; they excite a war betwixt nature and grace in his own breast; discord and jealousy arm them against each other; he is in danger of "losing them both in one day." The one must be banished from his father's house, the other mingles with idolators. Behold a wretched, blind old man, a prey to "grief of heart." But these things, on the other hand, dissolved not, interrupted not his covenant relation to God: they served but to cement and strengthen the divine friendship: and death which, to human apprehension, separates every connexion, and indeed tears asunder every mortal tie, only brought him into a clearer light, and to intercourse and intimacy, which can never expire.

"I am the God of Jacob." In all the wanderings, in all the dangers, in all the distresses of this patriarch; in all his successes, all his acquisitions, all his joys,

we discover the relation of God to him, expressed in these words; and we behold the presence of God with him whithersoever he went, constantly relieving the wretchedness of one state; dignifying and supporting the felicity of the other. This gave him security from the violence of an incensed brother; this cheered the solitude of Luz, and turned it into a Bethel; by this the slumbers of a head reposed on a pillar of stone were made refreshing and instructive; this repressed and overbalanced the rapacity of Laban; this supported and sanctified the loss of Joseph; this sweetened the descent into Egypt, and dissipated the gloom of death; by this, though dead, he exists, though silent he speaketh, "absent from the body he is present with the Lord;" the moment of his departure is on the wing to overtake that of his redemption from the power of the grave. Before God, the distance shrinks into nothing. The word, the one little word, I AM, unites the era of nature's birth with that of its dissolution, it joins eternity to eternity, "and swallows up death in victory."

The same gracious declaration applies, with equal truth and justice, to every son and daughter "of faithful Abraham," to every "Israelite indeed." We speak of departed friends in the *past* time, we "cannot but remember such things *were*; and *were* most dear to us;" but it is the glorious prerogative of Jehovah to employ eternally the *present* in describing his own essence, and his covenant relation to his people: "I AM THAT I AM." "I AM the God of thy father," of thy buried, thy lamented brother, friend, lover, child. And to us also is the word of this consolation sent, "Fear not, for I *am* with thee, be not dismayed, I *am* thy God." "Thus saith the Lord, that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel; Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou

walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For *I am* the Lord thy God, the Holy one of Israel, thy Saviour." Believing and resting upon this sure foundation, the christian triumphs in the prospect of "departing and being with Christ;" he smiles at the threatening looks of the king of terrors, exults and sings "with the sweet singer of Israel," "yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod, and thy staff, they comfort me. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever," Psalm xxiii. 4, 6, and triumphs with the enraptured apostle of the Gentiles, "O death, where is thy sting; O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. xv. 15, 17.

It is a transporting reflection, that the fond wishes and desires of the human heart are warranted, encouraged and supported by the revelation of God: that the life and immortality which we naturally pant after, are brought to light by the gospel. It is pleasant to find wise and good men, guided only by the light of reason, and the honest propensities of nature, cherishing that very belief, cleaving to that very hope, which the text inspires. Cicero, in his beautiful treatise on old age, while he relates the sentiments of others, sweetly delivers his own on this subject. The elder Cyrus, according to Xenophon, thus addressed his sons before his death: "Do not imagine, O my dear children, that when I leave you, I cease to exist. For even while I was yet with you, my spirit you could not discern; but that it animated this body you were fully assured by the actions which I performed. Be assured it will continue the same, though still you see it not. The glory of illustrious men would sink with them into the grave, were not their surviving spirits capable of exertion, and concerned to rescue their names from oblivion.

I can never suffer myself to be persuaded, that the man lives only while he is in the body, and dies when *it* is dissolved; or that the soul loses all intelligence on being separated from an unintelligent lump of clay; but rather that, on being liberated from all mixture with body, pure and entire, it enters upon its true intellectual existence. At death, any one may discover what becomes of the material part of our frame: all sinks into that from which it arose, every thing is resolved into its first principle; the soul alone is apparent neither while it is with us, nor when it departs. What so much resembles death as sleep? Now the powers of the mind, in sleep, loudly proclaim their own divinity; free and unfettered, the soul plunges into futurity, ascends its native sky. Hence we may conclude how enlarged those powers will be, when undepressed, unrestrained by the chains of flesh. Since these things are so, consider and reverence me as a tutelary deity. But, granting that the mind were to expire with the body, nevertheless, out of reverence to the immortal gods, who support and direct this fair fabric of nature, piously, affectionately cherish the memory of your affectionate father." The great Roman orator puts these words into the mouth of Cato, in addressing his young friends Scipio and Lælius. "Those excellent men, your fathers, who were so dear to me in life, I consider as still alive; and indeed, as now enjoying a state of being which alone deserves to be dignified with the name of life. For as long as we are shut up in this dungeon of sense, we have to toil through the painful and necessary drudgery of life, and to accomplish the laborious task of an hireling. The celestial spirit is, as it were, depressed, degraded from its native seat, and plunged into the mire of this world, a state repugnant to its divine nature and eternal duration." And again, "Nobody shall ever persuade me, Scipio, that your father Paullus, and your two grandfathers, Paullus and Africanus, and many other emi-

ment men whom it is unnecessary to mention, would have attempted and achieved so many splendid actions, which were to extend their influence to posterity, had they not clearly discerned that they had an interest in, and a connexion with the ages of futurity, and with generations yet unborn. Can you imagine, that I may talk a little of myself, after the manner of old men, can you imagine, that I would have submitted to so many painful toils, by night and by day, in the forum, in the senate, in the field, had I apprehended that my existence, and my reputation, were to terminate with my life? Were this the case, would it not have been much better to doze away in indolence an insignificant and useless life? But, I do not know how, the soul, incessantly exerting its native vigour, still sprung eagerly forward into ages yet to come, and seized them as its own.

“I feel myself transported with delight at the thought of again seeing and joining your fathers, whom on earth I highly respected and dearly loved; and, borne on the wings of hope and desire, I am speeding my flight to mingle in the honoured society, not of those only whom on earth I knew, and with whom I have conversed; but of those also of whom I have heard and read, and the history of whose lives I myself have written, for the instruction of mankind. I have the consolation of reflecting, that I have not lived wholly in vain: and I quit my station in life without regret, as the way-faring man, whose face is towards home, bids farewell to the inn where he had stopped for a little refreshment on his way. O glorious day, when I shall be admitted into the divine assembly of the wise and good! When I shall make an eternal escape from this sink of corruption, and the din of folly! When amidst the happy throng of the immortals, I shall find thee also, my son, my Cato, best, most amiable of men! On thy ashes, I bestowed the honours of the tomb. Ah! why did not mine

rather receive them from thy hand! But your spirit, I know it, has never forsaken me; but casting back many a longing, lingering look to your afflicted father, has removed to that region of purity and peace whither you were confident I should shortly follow you. And I feel, I feel our separation cannot be of long continuance.

“ If, indulging myself in this fond hope, my young friends, I am under the power of delusion, it is a sweet, it is an innocent delusion. I will hold it fast and never let it go, while I live. I despise the sneer of the witling, who would attempt to laugh me out of my immortality. Suppose him in the right, and myself under a mistake, he shall not have the power to insult me, nor shall I have the mortification of feeling his scorn, when we are both gone to the land of everlasting forgetfulness.”

How pleasing the thought, my dear christian friends, I again repeat it, how pleasing the thought, that the honest propensities of nature, the fairest conclusions of unassisted reason, and the most ardent breathings of truth and virtue, are here in unison with the clearest and most explicit declarations of the holy scriptures!

But the sacred Dove soars into a region which nature and reason never could have explored. Revelation, to the immortality of the soul, has added the resurrection of the body. And, “ wherefore should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?” The Spirit says to “ these dry bones, Live.” “ We believe that Jesus died and rose again.” What a sure ground of hope, that “ them also who sleep in Jesus, God will bring with him!” Delightful reflection! Who would be so unjust to God, and so unkind to himself, as to part with it? How it smooths the rugged path of life, how it tempers the bitterness of affliction, how it dissipates the horrors of the grave! One child sleeps in the dust, the diameter of the globe separates me from another, but the word of life, “ I AM the God of thy seed,” rescues that one from cor-

ruption, and puts the other in my embrace. Time dwindles into a point, the earth melts away, "the trumpet sounds," "the dead arise incorruptible." Behold all things are made new! "New heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." "Arise, let us go hence," and "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God."

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE II.

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.—HEBREWS. xi 24—27.

THE history of mankind contains many a lamentable detail of the sad reverses to which human affairs are liable; of the affluent, by unforeseen, unavoidable calamity, tumbled into indigence; of greatness in eclipse; of the mighty fallen; of princes dethroned, banished, put to death. In some instances of this sort, we see the unhappy sufferers making a virtue of necessity, and bearing their misfortunes with a certain degree of patience and magnanimity; but in general, sudden and great distress either sours or depresses the spirit, and men submit to the will of Providence with so ill a grace, that it is evident they are not under the power of religion, and that they flee not for consolation to the prospects of immortality.

We are this evening to contemplate one of those rare examples of true greatness of mind, which made a voluntary sacrifice of the most enviable situation, and the most flattering prospects, which human life admits

of; and that at an age when the heart is most devoted to the pursuit of pleasure, most susceptible of the allurements of ambition. It is the singular instance of Moses, the prophet and legislator of Israel, who, brought up from infancy in a court, instructed in all the learning of the Egyptians, treated as the heir of empire, and encouraged to aspire to all that the heart naturally covets, and that Providence bestows, on the most favoured of mankind; at the age of forty cheerfully resigned all these advantages, and preferred the life of a slave with his brethren, and of a shepherd in the land of Midian, among strangers, to all the luxury and splendour belonging to the son of Pharaoh's daughter, to all the dazzling hopes of royalty or of power next to majesty.

Scripture, in its own admirably concise method, dispatches the history of this great man's life, from his infancy to his fortieth year, in a few short words, namely, "and Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds," Acts vii. 22, as not deeming information concerning attainments in human science, or feats of martial prowess, worthy of the knowledge of posterity, compared to the triumphs of his faith, the generous workings of his public spirit, and the noble ardour of fervent piety.

Philo and Josephus, however, and other Jewish writers, have taken upon them to fill up this interval of time, by a fanciful, fabulous, unsupported account of the earlier years of Moses; which we should perhaps be disposed, in part, to retail for your amusement, if not for your instruction, had not the Spirit of God supplied us with well authenticated memoirs of a more advanced period of his life. In the perusal of which, with serious meditation upon them, we shall, I trust, find pleasure and profit blended together.

Taking inspiration then for our guide, we divide the history of Moses into three periods of equal dura-

tion in respect of time, namely, of forty years each; but very different in respect of situation, notoriety, and importance. The first, and of which the bible is silent, or speaks but a single word, presents him to us a student in the schools of the Egyptian Magi, one among the princes in the court of Pharaoh, a poet, an orator, a statesman, a general, or whatever else imagination pleases to make him. The second exhibits an humble shepherd, tending the flocks of Jethro, his father-in-law, and fulfilling the duties and exemplifying the virtues of the private citizen. In the third, we attend the footsteps of the saviour of his nation, the leader and commander, the lawgiver and judge of the Israel of God: under whom that chosen race was conducted from Egyptian oppression, to the possession of the land promised to Abraham and to his seed; the instrument chosen, raised up and employed of the Divine Providence, to execute the purposes of the Almighty, in a case which affected the general interests, spiritual and everlasting, of all mankind.

It is of the second of these periods we are now to treat; and though our materials be small and few, if we be so happy as to make a proper use of them, we shall find that, by the blessing of God, our labour has not been in vain.

In Moses, then, in the very prime and vigour of his life, we see a mind uncorrupted by the maxims and manners of an impious, tyrannical, idolatrous court; a mind not intoxicated by royal favour, not seduced by the allurements of ambition, not deadened by the uninterrupted possession of prosperity, to the impressions of humanity and compassion. And what preserved him? He believed in God. The mind's eye was fixed on Him who is invisible to the eye of sense. And what is the wisdom of Egypt compared to this? It was a land of astronomers, a land of warriors, a land of artists; and the improvement which Moses made in every liberal art and science, we may well

suppose was equal to any, the first, of the age and nation in which he lived. But a principle infinitely superior to every thing human, a principle not taught in the schools of the philosophers, a principle which carries the soul where it resides, beyond the limits of this little world, inspired high thoughts, dictated a noble, manly, generous conduct.

And first, it taught him to despise and to reject empty, unavailing, worldly honours. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter," Heb. xi. 24. Ordinary spirits value themselves on rank and distinction. Ordinary men, raised unexpectedly to eminence, strive to conceal and forget the meanness of their extraction; but Moses would rather pass for the son of a poor, oppressed Israelite, than for the adopted son and heir of the oppressing tyrant's daughter. Putting religion out of the question, true magnanimity will seek to derive consequence from itself, not from parentage or any other adventitious circumstance; will not consider itself as ennobled by what it could have no power over, nor debased by what has in its own nature no shame. To be either vain of one's ancestry, or ashamed of it, is equally the mark of a grovelling spirit. Art thou highly descended, my friend? Let high birth inspire high, that is, worthy, generous sentiments. Beware of disgracing reputable descent, by sordid, vulgar, vicious behaviour. Hast thou nothing to boast of in respect of pedigree? Strive to lay the foundation of thine own nobility: convince the fools of the world, that goodness is true greatness; that a catalogue of living virtues is much more honourable than a long list of departed names. Know ye not, that faith makes every one who lives by it more than the son of a king? For the son of a king may be a fool or a profligate; but faith makes its possessor a son of God, that is, a wise and a good man; and by it, Moses was more noble in the wilderness of Sinai, than in the imperial court of Pharaoh.

As this divine instructor taught him to undervalue and to refuse empty honours, so it inspired him with pity to his afflicted brethren. "And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren," *Exod. ii. 11.* Ease and affluence generally harden the heart. If it be well with the selfish man himself, he little cares what others endure. But religion teaches another lesson: "Love to God whom we have not seen," will always be productive of "love to men whom we have seen." From the root of faith many kindred stems spring up; and all bring forth fruit. There, arises the stately plant of heavenly-mindedness, producing the golden apples of self-government, self-denial, and contempt of the world; and close by its side, and sheltered by its branches, gentle sympathy expands its blossoms and breathes its perfumes; consolation to the afflicted, and relief to the miserable.

The progress of compassion, in Moses, is described with wonderful delicacy and judgment. First, he foregoes the pleasures of a court. Unable to relish a solitary, selfish gratification, while he reflected that his nearest and dearest relations were eating the bread and drinking the water of affliction, he goes out to look upon their misery, and tries by kind looks and words of love, to soothe their woes. Unable to alleviate, much less to remove their anguish, he is determined at least to be a partaker of it; and since he cannot raise them to the enjoyment of *his* liberty and ease, he voluntarily takes a share of *their* bondage and oppression. There is something wonderfully pleasing to a soul in trouble, to see one who might have shunned it, and have turned away from the sufferer, out of pure love, drinking from the same bitter cup, and submitting to the same calamity. At length an honest zeal breaks forth, and overleaps the bounds of patience and discretion. Seeing a brutal Egyptian smiting an Hebrew,

incapable of suppressing his indignation, he assaults the oppressor, and puts him to death. "Moses was meek above all the men of the earth." But "surely oppression maketh a wise man mad." This we allege as an apology for the conduct of Moses, not a vindication of it; for we pretend not to say it was in all respects justifiable. But it is one of those singular cases to which common rules will not apply.

The day after, he had the mortification of seeing two Hebrews striving together. Unhappy men! as if they had not enemies enough in their common, cruel task-masters; as if condemnation to labour in making bricks without some of the necessary materials, could not find employment for their most vigorous efforts; as if an edict to destroy all their male children from their birth, had not been sufficient to fill up the measure of their wo; they pour hatred and strife into the bowl, already surcharged with wormwood and gall. Wretched sons of men! eternally arraigning the wisdom and goodness of Providence; eternally complaining of the hardships of their lot; and eternally swelling the catalogue of their miseries, by their own perverseness and folly; adding vinegar to nitre, and then wondering how their distresses came to be so great! Moses reproved the offending Egyptian by a blow, and a mortal one; he tries to gain an offending brother by meekness and gentleness; he makes reason and humanity speak; but they speak in vain; for the same spirit that leads men to commit cruelty or injustice, leads them also to vindicate and support their ill conduct. "And he said to him that did the wrong, 'Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?'" Exod. ii. 13, 14. From this, Moses discovered that the rash action which he had committed the day before, was publicly known and talked of, and might prove fatal to him, unless he instantly fled from the danger. The affair had reached

the ears of Pharaoh, who, it would appear, wanted only a decent pretence to rid himself of a man of whom all Egypt was jealous. He hurries away therefore out of the territories of the king of Egypt, into that part of Arabia which is called Petrea, from its mountainous or rocky aspect; and by a singular concurrence of providential circumstances, is stopped at a city of that country called Midian, and is induced to remain there for many years.

There lived in this city a person of distinguished rank and station; but whether possessed of a sacred or a civil character, the ambiguity of the term in the holy language permits us not to determine; and the scripture leaves us totally uncertain whether he were a priest or a prince of Midian. But we are left in no doubt respecting his moral and intellectual qualifications; and we shall have no reason to be displeased at finding the history of Moses blended with that of so sensible and so good a man as Jethro, or Raguel, turns out to be. Whatever his dignity was, the sacerdotal or royal, we find his daughters trained up in all the simplicity of those early times; following the humble, harmless profession of shepherdesses. Wise is that father, kind and just to his children, who, whatever his station, possessions or prospects may be, brings up his sons and his daughters to some virtuous and useful employment; for idleness is not more odious, dishonourable and contemptible, than it is inimical to happiness, and irreconcilable to inward peace.

Moses, being arrived in the neighbourhood of Midian, weary and faint with a long journey, through a barren and unhospitable country, sits down by a well of water to rest and refresh himself. And, as a good man's footsteps are all ordered of the Lord, Providence sends him thither just at the moment, to succour the daughters of Raguel from the violence of some of their neighbours. In those countries, the precious fluid bestowed upon us in such boundless profusion, being dispensed as it were

in drops, became an object of desire and a ground of contention. The daughters of Jethro, sensible of their inferiority in point of strength, endeavour to supply it by diligence and address. They arrive at the well before their rival shepherds, and are preparing with all possible dispatch to water their flocks, when behold they are overtaken by these brutals, who rudely drive them and their flocks away, and cruelly attempt to convert the fruits of their labour to their own use. Moses, possessing at once sensibility, courage and force, takes part with the injured, and affords them effectual support against their oppressors. An helpless, timid female, assaulted and insulted, is an object of peculiar concern to a brave and generous spirit; and for this reason, courage and intrepidity are qualities in men, held in great and just estimation by the female sex.

If the heroic behaviour of Moses merit approbation and respect, the modest reserve of the virgin daughters of Raguel is equally amiable and praise-worthy. It does not appear that they solicited protection, but modestly received it: they look their thanks rather than utter them; and they deem it more suitable to their sex and character to appear ungrateful to a generous stranger, than to offend him by forwardness and indelicacy. They hasten home to their father, who, surprised at the earliness of their return, inquires into the cause of it. Happy I doubt not, to celebrate the praises of a man whose appearance and behaviour must have made a deep impression upon them, they relate the adventure of the morning; and Raguel, struck with the magnanimity, gallantry and spirit of this stranger's conduct, eagerly inquires after him, sends to find him out, invites him to his house and table, and endeavours to express that gratitude, which the young women could not, by every effort of kindness and hospitality.

Minds so well assorted as those of Moses and Jethro, and attracted to each other by mutual acts of beneficence, would easily assimilate and unite in friendship.

And the pleasing recollection of protection given and received, the natural sensibility of a female mind to personal accomplishments, but more especially to generosity and courage, on the one hand; and the irresistible charms of feminine beauty and modesty to a manly heart, on the other, would speedily and insensibly, between Moses, and some one of the priest of Midian's fair daughters, ripen into love. What follows, therefore, is all in the course of honest nature, which never swerves from her purpose, never fails to accomplish her end. But it was Providence that furnished the field and the instruments with which nature should work. That Providence which saved him forty years before from perishing in the Nile; that Providence which delivered him so lately from the hands of an incensed king; the same Providence now, by a concurrence of circumstances equally beyond the reach of human power or foresight, fixes the bounds of his habitation, forms for him the most important connexion of human life; and for another space of forty years makes him forget the tumultuous pleasures of a court, in the more calm and rational delights of disinterested friendship, virtuous affection, and heavenly contemplation.

It was in this delicious retreat, that the man of God is supposed to have composed, by divine inspiration, and to have committed to writing, that most ancient, most elegant, and most instructive of all books; which contains the history of the world, from the creation down to his own times: a period which no other writer has presumed to touch upon; holy ground which none but the foot of God himself has dared to tread. Here also, and at this time, as it is conjectured by interpreters, he wrote that beautifully poetical, moral, and historical work, the book of Job: which, for sublimity of thought, force of expression, justness of sentiment, strength of reasoning, and variety of matter, holds a distinguished place in the sacred code. If from the schools of the Magi he drew such stores of wisdom

and eloquence, high must our ideas rise of those noble seminaries of learning. But Moses derived his wonderful accomplishments from a much higher source, even from the everlasting Spring of all knowledge, even from him who made the heavens and the earth, and caused the light to arise; even from Him who can make the desert of Horeb a school of wisdom, and the simple to be wiser than all his teachers. Here, also, he has the felicity of becoming a father; and, even in Midian, God builds up one of the families of Israel.

And now at last the time to favour that despised, oppressed nation was come. Egypt had changed its sovereign in the mean time, but the seed of Jacob had felt no mitigation of their distress. Every change which they have undergone is only from evil to worse. Moses was now arrived at his eightieth year, but remained in the full vigour of his bodily strength, and of his mental powers. Erring, reasoning, cavilling man will be asking, Why was the employment of Moses in so important a service so long delayed? Wherefore bury such talents for such a space of time in the inglorious life of an obscure shepherd? Wherefore call a man at so late a period of life, in the evening of his day, in the decline of his faculties, to a service that required all the fervour, intrepidity, and exertion of youth? To all which we answer in the words of our Saviour on a well-known occasion, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power." Man is perpetually in a hurry, and often hastens forward without making progress; but "he that believeth shall not make haste." God, the father of believers, advances to his end, not in a vehement and hurried step, but in a solemn, steady, majestic pace; his progress, which we may in our folly account slow, in the issue proves to have been the most expeditious; and the course which human ignorance may condemn as irregular and circuitous, will be found in the end the shortest and the surest.

The course of the history then has brought us to that important, eventful hour, when the shepherd of Midian, trained up in retirement and contemplation, and converse with God, was to shake off his disguise, and stand confessed the minister of the most high God, the king in Jeshurn, the scourge of Egypt, the deliverer of Israel. As the commission which was given him to execute, and the station assigned to him, were altogether singular and uncommon, we are not to be surprised if the seal and signature affixed to that commission, and the powers bestowed for the faithful and effectual execution of it, should likewise be out of the usual course of things, and should announce the power and authority of Him, who granted it. But as this merits a principal place in the course of these exercises, we shall not compress it into the conclusion of a Lecture; hoping, through the help of God, to resume and continue the subject next Lord's day.

Such was Moses, the Jewish legislator, and hero, during the two first great periods of his life. But a greater than Moses is here, even He, "the latchet of whose shoes Moses is unworthy to stoop down and to unloose;" to whom Moses and Elias, on the mount of transfiguration, brought all their glory and honour and laid them at his feet!

Moses "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;" and Jesus disdained not to be called "the son of the carpenter." Supreme, all divine though He was, yet he declined not the society of the poorest, meanest, most afflicted of mankind!

Was the humiliation of Moses cheerful and voluntary, not forcibly obtruded upon him, but sought out and submitted to? Christ, though "in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant." Was sympathy a leading feature in the character of Moses? Jesus "hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted,

neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cried unto him he heard," Psalm xxii. 24. "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them, in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old," Isaiah lxiii. 9. Did Moses, through the vale of obscurity, arrive at the summit of glory? Of Christ it is said, as following up the scene of his humiliation, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." But the time would fail to point out every mark of resemblance. Christ derives no glory from similitude to Moses, but all the glory of Moses flows from his typifying Christ the Lord, in whom "all the promises are yea and amen," and who "is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE III.

*And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: And he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you—*EXODUS iii. 13, 14.

THE objects presented to us in the commerce of the world have a relative greatness, but those with which we converse in solitude and retirement possess a real grandeur and magnificence. A vast city, a numerous and well-disciplined army, a proud navy, a splendid court, and the like, dazzle the eyes of a stranger, and produce a transient wonder and delight. But a little acquaintance dissolves the charm; the dimensions of created greatness speedily contract, the glory departs, and what once filled us with astonishment is regarded with calm indifference, perhaps with disgust. The eye, almost with a single glance, reaches the end of human perfection, and instantly turns from what it has seen, in search of something yet undiscovered, striving to find in novelty and variety a compensation for the poverty, littleness, nothingness of the creature. But when we withdraw from the haunts of men, and either retire within ourselves or send our thoughts abroad to contemplate God and

his works, we meet a heighth and a depth which the line of finite understanding cannot fathom; we expatiate in a region which still discloses new scenes of wonder; we feel ourselves at once invited and checked, attracted and repelled; we behold much that we can comprehend and explain but much more that passeth knowledge; we find ourselves, like Moses at the bush, upon "holy ground," and the same wonderful sight is exhibited to our view—"JEHOVAH!" IN A FLAME OF FIRE! whose light irradiates and encourages our approach; but whose fervent heat arrests our speed, and remands us to our proper distance.

The great man had now passed the second great period of his life in the humble station of a shepherd, and the shepherd too of another man's flock. He had quitted the enchanted regions of high life, not only without regret, but with joy; not impelled by spleen, nor soured by disappointment; but filled with a noble disdain for empty honours, with generous sympathy towards his afflicted brethren, animated by exalted piety which settled on an invisible God, and inspired with a soul which looked at pomp with contempt, and on obscurity with acquiescence and desire. It was in this calm retreat that he cultivated those qualities, which proved more favourable to the designs of Providence than all the learning which he had acquired in Egypt.

At the age of eighty the race of glory is at an end with most men; nay, the drama of life concludes with the generality long before that period arrives. But the same activity and usefulness of Moses commenced not till then; for as it is never too early, so it is never too late to serve God and to do good to men; and true wisdom consists in waiting for and following the call of Heaven, not in anticipating and outrunning it. Abraham was turned out a wanderer and an exile at seventy-five. And Moses at four-score was sent upon an enterprise, which it required much courage to undertake, much vigour to conduct and support, and a

great length of time to execute. But before the divine mandate every mountain of difficulty sinks, "every valley is exalted, the crooked becomes straight, and the rough places plain." Abraham, at the head of a handful of servants, subdues five victorious kings, with their armies: Sarah, at ninety, bears a son; and Moses, at eighty, with a simple rod in his hand, advances to succour Israel, and to crush the power of Egypt.

The solemnity with which the commission was given suited the dignity and importance of the undertaking. The whole was of God, and HE does every thing in a manner worthy of himself. While Moses was employed in the innocent cares and labours of his lowly station; and faithful attention to the duties of our several stations is the best preparation for the visits of the Almighty; a very unusual and unaccountable appearance presented itself to his eyes. A bush wholly involved in flames, yet continuing unchanged, undiminished, unconsumed by the fire. Whether nature preserves her steady tenor, or suffers an alteration or suspension of the laws by which she is usually governed, the finger of God is equally visible in both; for, what power, save that which is divine, could have established and can maintain the order and harmony of the universe? And what power short of Omnipotence can break in upon that order; can make the sun to stand still, or its shadow return back to the meridian after it had declined; can leave to fire its illuminating, but withdraw its devouring quality; and render artificial fire, such as that of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, harmless to the three children of the captivity, but fatal to the ministers of the king of Babylon? Were our hearts right with God, miraculous interpositions would be unnecessary; every creature, every event should promote our acquaintance with our Maker. And such is the condescension of the Most High, that he vouchsafes to cure our ignorance, inattention or unbelief, by making the mighty sacrifice of that

stated course of things, which his wisdom settled at first, and which his power continues to support. Rather than man shall remain unchanged, unredeemed, the great system of nature shall undergo alteration; fire shall cease to burn, the Nile shall run blood instead of water, the sun forget to shine for three days together; the eternal uncreated Word shall become flesh, and the fountain of life to all, shall expire in death.

It required not the sagacity of a Moses to discover, that there was something extraordinary here. But mistaking it at first for merely an unusual, natural appearance, whose cause, by a closer investigation, he might be able to discover, he is preparing by nearer observation to satisfy his curiosity; when lo! to his still greater astonishment, the bush becomes vocal as well as brilliant, and he hears his own name distinctly and repeatedly called, out of the midst of the flame. Curiosity and wonder are now checked by a more powerful principle than either. Terror thrills in every vein, and arrests his trembling steps. How dreadful must the visitations of God's anger be to his enemies, if to his best beloved children, the intimation of his goodness, clothed in any thing like sensible glory, be so awful and overwhelming? When I meet thee, O my God, stripped of this veil of flesh, may I find thee a pure, a genial and lambent flame of loving-kindness, not a consuming fire of wrath and vengeance!

Moses instantly comprehends that the Lord was there; or if he could for a moment have doubted who it was that talked with him, in a moment his doubt must have been removed by the continuation of the voice of Him who spake. We find here, as in many other places of the Old Testament, the same person who is styled, in the course of the narration, the "Angel of the Lord," styling himself JEHOVAH and GOD; exercising divine prerogatives, manifesting divine perfections, and claiming the homage which is due to Deity alone. The person therefore, thus described,

can be none other than the uncreated "Angel of the covenant," who "at sundry times, and in divers manners," in maturing the work of redemption, assumed a sensible appearance; and at length, in the fulness of time, united his divine nature to ours, and dwelt among men, and made them "to behold his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Every thing here is singular and every thing instructive. The first interview between God and Moses inspires terror; but the spirit of bondage gradually dies away, and refines into the spirit of adoption and love. Acquaintance begets confidence. "Perfect love casteth out fear;" and the man who spake to God with trembling in Horeb, by and by becomes strengthened to endure his presence forty days and nights together, in Sinai. "Enduring, as seeing Him who is invisible," he "despised the wrath of an earthly king." When he comes to the knowledge of that same God, by the seeing of the eye and the hearing of the ear, he "exceedingly fears and quakes; abhors himself, and lies low in dust and ashes." But, following on to know the Lord, he comes at length to converse with Him, as a man with his friend. "Acquaint thyself then with him, and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee." Miserable beyond expression, beyond thought are they, whose acquaintance with God has to begin at death; who having lived without a gracious, merciful, long-suffering God in the world, find they must, by a dreadful necessity, fall into the hands of a neglected, forgotten, righteous, incensed God, when they leave it.

The appearance of Jehovah in the bush was not only preternatural, but emblematical; it not only sanctioned the commission given to Moses by the seal of Deity, but exhibited a lively representation of the state of his church and people in Egypt; oppressed, but not crushed, brought low, but not deserted of Heaven, in the midst of flames, but not consumed. And it is a strik-

ing emblem of the church of God in the world, to the end of time; "troubled on every side, yet not distressed, perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not forsaken, cast down, but not destroyed."

The same voice which solicited intercourse with Moses, which tendered friendship, which encouraged hope, sets a fence about the divine Majesty; it reminds him of his distance, of his impurity; it forbids rashness, presumption, familiarity. In veneration of the spot which God had honoured with his special presence, he is commanded to "put off his shoes from off his feet;" a mandate, which by an image natural and obvious, enjoins the drawing near to God in holy places, and in sacred services, with seriousness, attention and reverence; divested of that impurity which men necessarily contract by coming into frequent contact with the world. And surely, it is owing to the want of a due sense of the majesty of God upon our spirits, that his house is profaned and his service marred by levity, carelessness and inattention. Did we seriously consider that the place where we stand is "holy ground," that the word which we speak and hear is "not the word of men, but of the living God," could one short hour's attendance betray us into slumber? Could the little jealousies and strife of a base world intrude into a worshipping heart? Could the eye find leisure to wander upon the dress and appearance of another? Durst a scornful leer or simpering countenance communicate from one vain, silly, irreverent spirit to another, the private sneer and censure? Would there be a contention for place and pre-eminence? Now, surely, God is as really, though less sensibly, in this place, as he was in the bush at Horeb: and though we see him not, his eyes are continually upon us, and he will bring every thing into judgment. O Lord, open thou our eyes, that we may behold Thee, and every other object shall instantly disappear.

The words which follow, if any thing can increase

their intrinsic force and importance, derive a peculiar energy and value to the christian world, as the passage quoted by our blessed Lord, from an authority which they could not deny, to confute the Sadducees, on the subject of the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body. "I AM the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." We speak of the dead, under the idea that they *were*; but God represents them as still existing, and his relation to them as unbroken, his care of them as uninterrupted. The effect which this declaration had upon Moses, is such as might have been expected; no more "turning aside to see this great sight;" he hides his face, "afraid to look upon God." It is ignorance of God, not intimate communion, which encourages forwardness and freedom. Angels, who know him best, and love him most, are most sensible of their distance; and are represented as "covering their faces with their wings," when they approach their dread Creator.

In the declaration which immediately follows, under a sanction so solemn and affecting, which shall we most admire, the mercy and goodness of God, or his perfect wisdom and foreknowledge? Four hundred years have elapsed since this wretched state of his posterity had been foretold and revealed to Abraham. For wise and gracious purposes it was appointed and brought to pass. But the days of darkness are now almost ended, and the sun returns. Like rain from heaven to a dry and thirsty land, the promises of favour and salvation fall upon a persecuted, oppressed people: and "that Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge?" is, after an interval of forty years, sent back to Egypt, on the kind and merciful errand of salvation to an oppressed and persecuted people.

Moses, however, it would appear, has not forgotten the surly reception which his well-meant interposition had met with from his brethren so long before; and

presumes to urge it as a reason, why a person of more influence and authority should be entrusted with the commission.

He considered not, that formerly he acted from the impulse of his own mind; with indeed an upright and benevolent intention, but with a zeal rather too bold and impetuous; whereas now, he was following the direction of Providence, and was therefore certain of success. As there is a sinful pride which urges men to seek stations and employments, to which they have neither pretensions, title, nor qualification; so there is a sinful humility, which shrinks from the call of God, which, in the guise of self-denial, contains the spirit of rebellion and disobedience; and which, under the affectation of undervaluing and debasing our own persons and qualities, indirectly charges God with foolishness, in choosing an instrument so inapt and improper. Such humility is of the very essence of pride, and such, with regret we observe it, was the spirit by which Moses was on this occasion actuated. The heavenly vision removes the objection at once, by assuring him of the divine presence, blessing and support; and refers him for the proof of it, to a train of events closely succeeding each other; and all issuing in the people's assembling together, in that very spot, to worship, after their enfranchisement, all forming a chain of evidence, that the authority under which he acted was divine.

Still doubting and irresolute, Moses ventures to urge another difficulty, which he expresses in these terms; "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you: and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them?" God had already declared his name, and purpose, and given his charge, and yet Moses dares to make inquiry. How rare a thing it is, to see a soul wholly resolved into the will of God! How seldom do we find a faith entirely disposed

to be, to do, and to endure, neither more nor less than what God is pleased to appoint! But the incredulity and presumption of Moses shall not render the design of God of none effect. When men are contradicted or opposed, they fly out, and storm, and threaten. But the great God bears with our forwardness and folly, gives way to our scruples, and, yielding to our obstinacy, overcomes evil with good. And we are almost tempted to rejoice that Moses stood out so long, as it gave occasion to the most solemn and satisfying proclamation of the name and nature of God, from his own mouth, and the most amiable and engaging picture of tender mercy and long-suffering that ever was exhibited. “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: And he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.”

What flimsy things are commissions issued under the hand-writing and seals of kings, compared to this! a shred of parchment, a morsel of wax, an unmeaning scrawl; a slender, contracted, short-lived power, delegated from one worm to another. Where is now the signet of Ahasuerus, which pretended to communicate irreversible authority to the writing whereto it was affixed? Where are the warrants under which the statesmen and heroes of other times deliberated, fought and conquered? With the princes who granted them they are gone to oblivion. They *were* what they *were*. They fulfilled their day, and then they fell asleep, and now are seen no more! What avail the long list of empty titles, which potentates and princes, in the pride of their hearts, affix to their perishing names? All shrink and fade, before that tremendous Power, whose authority no change of circumstances can effect, whose existence no succession of ages can impair; who, yesterday, to day, and forever still proclaims of himself, “I AM.”

Nothing can equal the simplicity, sublimity and

force of these remarkable words. Independency of existence, eternity of duration, immutability of purpose, faithfulness and truth in keeping covenant and shewing mercy, are all conveyed in one little sentence, "I AM THAT I AM." Longinus, the celebrated critic, has with equal judgment and taste, quoted a well known passage from the writings of Moses, as an instance of the true sublime, viz. the first words pronounced by the Creator in the formation of the world, "And God said let there be light, and there was light." Why did not Longinus dip deeper into the works of this great historian; why did he not enrich and embellish his own beautiful little book, and farther approve his exquisite taste, by inserting other passages from the page of inspiration, particularly the passage under review? A passage which Jews, Heathens and Christians, as one man, have consented to admire.

Under the sanction of this most awful name, God repeats his commission, repeats his charge, repeats his promise of support, assistance and success: success with the elders of Israel; success with the people; success against Pharaoh. And yet, Moses "staggers at this promise," "although it be the promise of the Eternal, through unbelief!" What have we most to wonder at here, the strange incredulity and perverseness of the *prophet*, or the singular fidelity and exactness of the *historian*, in recording his own errors? God has said "they *shall* hearken to thy voice!" yet Moses presumes, in the face of this express declaration, to gainsay and draw back.—"And Moses answered, and said, But behold, they *will* not believe me; nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, the LORD hath not appeared unto thee." Surely "the Lord is GOD, and not man, and therefore the children of men are not consumed." A man of common spirit would here have broken off the conference, and left the timid, froward shepherd to his

own folly, and permitted him to remain destitute of the honour which he obstinately persevered to decline. But it pleased God to show us patience, at least in one instance, too powerful for unbelief: “for his ways are not like our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts.”

He who would cure infidelity in others, must first be purged of the old leaven himself. To effect this in the heart of his servant Moses, God vouchsafes to perform miracle upon miracle. He turns the rod which was in the hand of Moses into a serpent; and from a serpent to a rod again; in order to intimate to him and to the world that the most harmless things become noxious, and the most pernicious things innocent, at his command. His hand is in a moment covered with leprosy, and in a moment restored—to shew the power of God’s holy law to fix guilt upon the sinner, and of his grace to remove it from the penitent. He is enjoined and authorised to perform these signs before all Israel, in order to produce that conviction in them, which they had first wrought upon his own mind. Should these still happen to fail, he is permitted to go a step farther. Nature shall submit to a thorough alteration, rather than the seed of faithful Abraham continue slaves in Egypt, or perish through unbelief. Water shall become blood before their eyes, rather than the blood of their innocent children be poured out any more like water upon the ground.

And now, surely, Moses is gained, and the work of God shall no longer stand still. Alas! the sullen spirit is not yet subdued. Though forced to retreat, he continues to fight as he retires. The slowness of Israel to believe, was formerly the plea; now his own want of talents is urged in excuse of his strange backwardness and disobedience. That objection too is immediately removed, by a promise of wisdom and eloquence suited to the occasion. The language of

the oracle, and the long-suffering of the speaker are miraculous and supernatural, as all the other circumstances of the case. And the Lord said unto him, "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say," Exodus iv. 11, 12.

"Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth!" This instead of producing humble submission and instantaneous compliance, without a reason and without a plea, meets with a direct refusal; "O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send." And now what heart does not tremble for fear, that the fire which had spared the bush, should wax hot, to punish the madness of the prophet? What patience can endure such a repetition of insult? The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses; and—and what? O it becomes a flame of love to melt his heart and purify it of its dross. "The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also behold, he cometh forth to meet thee; and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart." Providence had all this while been preparing a concluding, a convincing proof of power, wisdom and goodness inconceivable. Lo, Aaron is already far advanced on his way from Egypt, in quest of his brother.

That after so long an interval, through a field of so many chances, he should at that very instant of time arrive—How is it to be accounted for? On no other principle but this, the Lord is "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." "He seeth the end from the beginning." He saith, "My counsel shall stand, and I will fulfil all my pleasure." "He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." Let every knee bow, let

every tongue confess, let every heart adore, and love and submit.

Moses is at length subdued, and we stand with astonishment and joy to contemplate the triumph of mercy over judgment. God grant we may improve the example of his divine patience as a pattern. God in mercy preserve us from presuming upon it, as an encouragement to offend. And may God bless what has been spoken. Amen.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE IV.

And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel; but they hearkened not unto Moses, for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage—EXODUS vi. 9.

EVERY nation has in its history events of peculiar importance, which latest posterity is disposed fondly to commemorate. But the memory of remarkable deliverances is necessarily blended with the recollection of heavy distress or imminent danger, and whether as men, or as citizens, we greatly rejoice, by that very joy we expressly declare that we, or our fathers, once had cause to mourn. Perpetual sunshine suits not the state of the natural world; perpetual success is by no means favourable either to human happiness or virtue. Hunger is necessary to give a relish to food; the gloom of winter is the happiest recommendation of the cheerfulness and bloom of spring. We discover the value of health by disease; and the blessings of peace would be but half understood, were it not for the antecedent anxieties and calamities of war. Men therefore act foolishly as well as impiously when they charge the wise, righteous and merciful Governor of the world, with carelessness or unkindness, because he admits into the system of his works, or into his moral government of the universe, what ignorance calls disorder, what presumption cries down as unnecessary, and pride condemns as unjust.

What so irregular at first sight, and always so to the vulgar eye, as the face of the starry heavens? A handful of little sparks, scattered at random in the air! But to the attentive, inquiring, enlightened spirit, they present a vast combination of worlds, each in its place, every one moving in its proper orbit; the whole possessing every quality that can at once excite astonishment and inspire delight; greatness, order, beauty, harmony, utility! They present excellencies obvious to the slightest observation of the most shallow understanding; excellencies undiscoverable by the closest investigation of the most penetrating genius. Now, clownish thoughtlessness and stupidity are not more incompetent to judge of the order and frame of nature, than passion and prejudice, by which all men are governed, are to determine upon the wisdom and goodness of the ways of Providence. Every man would have every thing bend to his humour, conveniency, indolence or interest. This would produce, were it permitted, endless confusion and misery, did not God overrule and employ the activity and the indolence, the senseless caprices and the jarring interests of men to execute his purposes, and without their intention, nay, in spite of their efforts, making them productive of regularity, stability and happiness.

In contemplating, therefore, agents and events, those of which we have heard and read, or those which we see and in which we are concerned, the only road to composure and improvement is, to consider the whole as the work of a supreme, intelligent, almighty, invisible Agent, who is carrying on a plan which we comprehend not, or understand only in part, and who, from all that we can know of him from nature, from experience, and from revelation, takes delight in shewing mercy and doing good, but who, in the exercise of even these gracious prerogatives, governs not himself by the partial lights, hasty conceptions and contracted views of ignorant, erring men, but by his

own all-comprehending intelligence, all-pervading benignity, all-subduing love.

If, in that portion of ancient history which is now to come under our consideration, we observe Providence treating one nation with uncommon severity, and another with indulgence altogether as singular, we are to regard the parties not as they are in themselves, or in relation to each other, but in their relation to God and to mankind in general, as an important link in the great chain of Providence, as serving and instructing the human race to the end of the world. The perverseness and unbelief of Moses met with pity and forgiveness, and were cured by a series of miracles. The impiety and unbelief of Pharaoh met with resentment and punishment, and were even confirmed and strengthened by a most awful series of miracles; not for the sake of Moses and Pharaoh merely, but to illustrate in the eyes of the whole world the goodness and severity of God; the wisdom and safety of repentance and submission on the one hand, the madness and danger of impenitence on the other. Egypt was plagued, and Israel saved, that violence and cruelty might be awakened to see the naked sword of justice suspended by a single hair over its guilty throat; and that misery and depression might find a refuge from despair.

We have seen with what solemnity the commission to Moses for the deliverance of Israel was granted, and the awful seal which was appended to it; even the great and fearful name, JEHOVAH, "I AM THAT I AM." We have seen the backwardness, irresolution and timidity of the prophet, in undertaking an employment so flattering to ambition, so desirable to the spirit of patriotism, so elevating to a mind awake to the influence of religion. We have seen the goodness and condescension of God in deigning, by repeated exertions of power and mercy, to remove the scruples and level the objections of incredulity and fear. And we have seen Aaron, the brother of Moses, providen-

tially conducted to the spot, and at the moment, to establish a belief in the divine power and veracity, to confirm the wavering, trembling soul, and constituted to a share of the diligence, difficulty, danger and glory of the illustrious enterprize.

Behold the two plain old men, one of eighty, and the other of eighty-three years old, setting out from the deserts of Arabia, on an undertaking to human reason the most wild and romantic that ever was attempted; to persuade or to constrain one of the most powerful princes of the world, to enfranchise, nay, to dismiss the tenth part of his most valuable and useful subjects! And how are they provided for this vast undertaking? The pleas of reason, the powers of eloquence, the calls of humanity, the claims of justice, it is well known, make but a feeble impression on the hearts of kings, when their pride, ambition or interest oppose. For such a vast multitude to slip away by stealth is impossible, and to think of forcing an escape from a power so greatly superior is rashness and ruin. When *men* engage in hazardous and difficult expeditions, they levy armies, accumulate treasure, provide magazines, strengthen themselves with alliances. But when God addresses himself to action, we behold no apparatus, no effort. Is an universe to start out of nothing? “*GOD speaks, and it is done.*” Is a sun to arise, and light to shine? *GOD* says, “Let there be light.” Is a great nation to be subdued, and a little one asserted into liberty? Our eyes are directed, not to a general at the head of a mighty host, but to a shepherd with his crook in his hand.

But the commands of Heaven break not in upon the sacred duties and the virtuous charities of private life. The charge given to Moses was pressing, the object most important, and the authority under which it was issued, supreme; but yet he is permitted to return for a little while, to attend the calls of nature, of gratitude, to the gentle claims of filial piety,

of conjugal and paternal affection. He went back to his father-in-law to acknowledge his protection, hospitality and kindness to him when a stranger, to inform him of the extraordinary commission he had just received, and the necessity he was thereby laid under of immediately entering upon the execution of it; to obtain his consent for this purpose, and to ask his paternal benediction. Religion is in a happy state in the soul of that man; who has learned to unite and reconcile the views and pursuits of the citizen with those of the private man, who pleads not the performance of one duty as an excuse for the omission of another; whose life exhibits every moral and divine principle in action, every one in his season, every one in his place. How simple and affectionate the dismissal which honest Raguel gave to Moses, compared to that of the selfish rapacious Laban to Jacob: *Gen. xxxi. 26, &c.* "Go in peace!" says Raguel; an adieu expressive at once of submission to the will of Providence, and of affection to his son-in-law, mixed with regret at the thought of parting with him.

It pleased God again to confirm the confidence of Moses, by assuring him that all who had ever harboured a design against his life were now dead; and that nothing therefore remained, but to address himself boldly to his great work. Accompanied with his wife and two sons, he leaves the land of Midian, and proceeds towards Egypt.

On his journey, a very extraordinary incident occurs: but the conciseness of the sacred history leaves it involved in much darkness and difficulty. God had blessed him with two sons in Midian, whom in compliance with the commandment of God, and as a son of Abraham, he ought to have circumcised on the eighth day from their birth. This, however, either for want of the proper minister, from inattention, or out of improper respect to the feelings or prejudices of Zipporah his wife, or some other reason that ap-

pears not, had been hitherto wholly neglected; and thereby his children, the younger at least, through his neglect, seems to have incurred the dreadful penalty denounced by the terms of the covenant against uncircumcised persons, that of being "cut off from his people." This punishment God seems disposed to exact at the hand of Moses himself, who was indeed the guilty person, by attacking him either with a threatening bodily distemper, by remorse of conscience for his criminal neglect, by the appearance of an avenging angel, or some other sensible token of displeasure. But the difficulty is, Why the conduct of Moses in this respect was never called in question before? Why he was not purged of his guilt before he was honoured at all with the divine commission? Why the precept was enforced upon a journey, and at an inn, where the operation could be performed less commodiously, and was accompanied with some degree of danger? What could Zipporah mean when she reproached Moses as "a bloody husband?" The passage is evidently enveloped in much obscurity; and probably with design. Instead of curiously inquiring into its hidden meaning, an attempt vain and unprofitable, we may, by the blessing of God, learn from it more than one practical lesson, neither obscure nor unimportant; and this, no doubt, the Spirit of God principally intended. The first is, that no circumstances of prudence or conveniency can ever be with propriety urged as a dispensation with a clearly commanded duty. Secondly, that as there may be a sinful undervaluing of the feelings, prejudices and inclinations of our near and dear relations, so there may be a sinful tenderness for, and compliance with them, to the neglect of God's known and declared will, and at the risk of falling under his just censure. Thirdly, that he who is to be the interpreter of the law to others, ought in all points to be blameless, and in all things conformed to the law himself. To which we may add yet a fourth, not

of less importance than any of these; namely, that when God has procured the proper respect to his revealed will, the controversy between him and the offender is at an end, the object of his government being not so much to avenge himself as to amend the criminal.

This scene of domestic danger and distress is speedily followed by another of a pleasanter kind, namely, the interview between the two brothers, in the wilderness; an interview attended with many circumstances to render it mutually interesting and satisfactory. It must have been highly gratifying to Moses, after being forty years among strangers, to meet his own father, to receive particular information concerning his family and nation, and to communicate to a friendly ear the knowledge of his own situation during so long an interval. What must it have been, on the other hand, to Aaron, to learn from the mouth of his brother the great designs of Providence respecting themselves and their people? With what overflowings of love would they mingle their sighs and tears? With what ardour would their united prayers, and vows, and praises ascend to heaven? How confirmed the faith, how upward the zeal of each, strengthened and stimulated by that of the other! They go on their way rejoicing, they are following God, and they must prosper.

Moses had found the evidence of his divine mission completed, in the opportune arrival of his brother Aaron, according to the declaration of the oracle in the bush; and he soon finds a resolution of his doubts, in the very entrance upon the discharge of his office. Compare the first, and the two last verses of this 4th chapter, and see what a contrast they form to one another. "And Moses answered, and said, Behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." "And Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the

signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped. The tremendous name JEHOVAH affixed as a seal to the record, and vouching its authority by sign upon sign, quickly produces belief: and inspired gratitude and joy, corrected by reverence and godly fear. So far then, the way is cleared, and Moses is no longer rejected as an upstart and intruder, as presuming to take upon himself the office of prince and judge over his brethren.

But this is the smallest difficulty in the way. Who does not eagerly cleave to the prospect of returning liberty? Men do brave things incredible, attempt things impossible, endure things intolerable, when freedom, precious freedom is the object. No wonder then that oppressed, groaning Israel should greedily listen to the voice of this heavenly charmer. But the grand difficulties are yet to wind. Their fetters will not fall off by a wish. The fond desires dictate not the edicts of Pharaoh. The smarting of the strokes of their task-masters' whips are not to be conjured away by a sound. The question is not, will Israel believe? but will the king of Egypt comply? Every step Moses advances, he finds new and growing proof of the truth and faithfulness of God. For the same mouth which declared concerning the children of Israel, "they shall hearken unto thy voice," declared concerning Pharaoh, "I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no not by a stronger hand." The faith and obedience of the one, therefore, and the insolence and pride of the other, equal and conjointly demonstrated to Moses, that the Lord had spoken unto him.

Armed, therefore, with a command from on high, confident of the goodness of their cause, and exalted above the fear of man, Moses and his brother advance boldly into the presence of the king, and make their

requisition in these lofty and majestic words; “Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.”

In some ancient Jewish fragment, we have an account of four miracles, by which Moses signalized his entrance into Egypt. First, he made fire to issue out of the earth, in the eyes of all Israel, and thereby produced confidence in him as their deliverer. Secondly, being shut up in prison by order of Pharaoh, he brake the bars, burst open the gates, struck the guards with death, and released himself. Thirdly, he pronounced in the ears of the king, the name of JEHOVAH—at the sound of which that prince became deaf, and after a certain interval recovered his hearing, through the interposition of him who had taken it away. Fourthly, by the use of the same awful name, he deprived all the Egyptian priests of sense and motion. To this the Rabbins add, that on entering the palace of the tyrant, he was suddenly clothed with a dreadful form, and a countenance bright and majestic, like that of an angel. But we have no need to resort to fancy for a description of the magnificence of the scene, neither is there reason to suppose that any part of the glory of Moses consisted in personal lustre. His employer and his errand lend him sufficient dignity and importance, without the glare which dazzles the eye.

Whatever were the outward appearance of Moses, his message, we know, was treated by Pharaoh with insolence and contempt, in these words; “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice, to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.” We are not to conclude that Pharaoh was an atheist, from his using this impious language. No; Egypt was a country wholly given to superstition; a land which had multiplied deities to itself. It was JEHOVAH whom he scorned to acknowledge. It was the God of Israel whom he despised. He judged of

the power of their Patron and Protector from their own present forlorn condition.

The method which Moses and Aaron employed to obtain the end of their mission, is a beautiful and an instructive, and an alarming representation of the conduct of Providence, towards sinners in general. They begin with delivering a plain message, in the name of their master. Being repulsed, they proceed to argue and expostulate. A deaf ear being turned to the voice of reason and humanity, they have recourse to more extraordinary proofs of the weight and authority of their commission; proofs which, indeed, mark an Almighty arm; but an arm stretched out to convince, not to crush. A bold defiance being given to Omnipotence, what other method of working conviction and of procuring respect is left, but to let it fall with all its dreadful weight on the head of the defier?

It happened to Israel, as it often does to men struggling to get free from the pressure of calamity, their efforts only serve to plunge them deeper in the mire; and it happened to Moses and Aaron, as it sometimes befalls men actuated by a similar good intention, but with less title and encouragement, their interference hurts those whom it was meant to serve; and they have the mortification of seeing the miseries of their poor brethren cruelly increased, through what might be deemed their own zeal and officiousness. The inflexible tyrant avenges himself, for the freedom taken with the king of Egypt, by persons so low and contemptible, upon the bleeding shoulders of thousands of wretches, who could not redress themselves, and who durst not complain. Miserable condition indeed! where the caprice of one man determines the fate of millions! Happy the nation where not men but laws govern!

Providence, in this instance, seems resolved to try how far savage cruelty and patient suffering can go;

but ready to interfere in both, when they have come to the extreme. Israel is not prepared for salvation, till the cup of woe is full, and deliverance is despair-ed of from every quarter save Heaven: and Pharaoh feels not the rod of God's anger, till having filled up the measure of his iniquity, hardened his heart against God and against man, poured contempt upon mercy, and braved infinite justice, he exalts himself into an awful monument to every impenitent sinner of the desperate madness of fighting with his Maker.

Moses is ready to sink afresh, under this cruel disappointment. The reproaches of the unhappy sufferers, called, forced, lashed into labour, beyond what their strength could bear, cut him to the heart, and again he shrinks from the task which was imposed on him: and in these desponding words, he ventures to pour out the anguish of his soul before the Lord; "Wherefore hast thou so evil intreated this people? Why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name he hath done evil to this people, neither hast thou delivered thy people at all."

Thus far has flowed the angry tide of proud imperious passion; and thus low has ebbed the trembling, retreating stream of baffled expectation. And now, "It is time, Lord, that thou work!" To the one he saith, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." To the other, "Return, and fill all thy channels, and overflow all thy banks."

The angel of the Lord begins with re-assuring Moses himself, by a recapitulation of the tenor of the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, under the sanction of his name as the LORD GOD ALMIGHTY. In all these wanderings, weaknesses and distresses, they had been encouraged to trust in a Being, omnipotent to protect them, all-sufficient to supply their wants. But their posterity were henceforth

to know him by another name, and under a new description, even the incommunicable, unutterable name, which denotes eternal, unchangeable, self-existence; deriving nothing from any, but conferring upon all, life, and breath, and all things; who is above all, through all, and in all; “the same yesterday, to-day, and forever:” and, of consequence, true to his word, faithful in keeping covenant, unalterable in his decrees!

Under the seal of that most tremendous, most animating and inspiring name, Moses is again dispatched to the people, with the assurance of a speedy, an instantaneous appearance in their behalf. But alas! their spirit is broken, by the long continuance and accumulated weight of their calamities. They have been disappointed so often, that they can believe, can hope no longer; and the message delivered by Moses is like a charming song upon the ear of a deaf or a dead man. He is sent from the people to Pharaoh, with a repetition of the demand of Heaven upon him. But alas! the messenger himself has caught the desponding spirit of the unhappy men whom he had been last visiting; and the heart of Pharaoh has not in the least relented. Heaven seems to have interposed somewhat too late; the cause appears lost. Let us judge nothing rashly; let us not judge before the time. Let us humbly and patiently wait the issue, and then condemn if we dare, if we can.

Moses at the bush saw God, under the appearance of a flame of fire; but no man can see God and live. “No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” The deliverer of Israel needed himself to be nurtured and prepared for the discharge of his high office; but the Saviour of a lost world entered upon the execution of his infinitely more arduous task, every way qualified to bring it to a happy conclusion. The Jewish lawgiver stood himself condemned by the law,

and was a partaker with others in guilt and transgression; the Christian Leader was "holy, harmless and undefiled." Moses undertook the work assigned to him, slowly and reluctantly; but, O, with what readiness did the friend of mankind press forward to the perfecting of his kind design; "Lo I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart," Psalm xl. 7, 8. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" Luke xii. 50. —And yet there was no shame, no pain, no cross in the way of Moses; whereas the Captain of salvation was to be "made perfect through sufferings;" nevertheless, he advanced undismayed to the combat. "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer," ib. xxii. 15. Moses frequently retired from the conflict, shrunk from the difficulty and danger, failed in the hour of trial; but our great Leader and Commander went on "conquering and to conquer;" turned not back; desisted not from doing and from suffering, till he could say, "*It is finished.*" The sun of righteousness shineth in his strength, let every star hide his diminished head. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE V.

The Lord said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do unto Pharaoh; for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.—EXODUS vi. 1.

THE history of the divine conduct is the best illustration of the nature of GOD. Do we desire to know what the Supreme Being *is*? We have but to consider what he *does*. Are we anxious to be satisfied of the truth of the declarations made by the great JEHOVAH concerning himself in his word? Let us compare them with the history and experience of men in every age. The proofs of the divine goodness and mercy are written in characters so fair, and are so frequently presented to our view, that not to observe them must argue the grossest stupidity and inattention; and not to acknowledge, love and adore the glorious Source of that unbounded goodness, must argue the blackest ingratitude. When the Lord makes himself known by the *judgments* which he executes, we see him advancing, to use the ideas and the language of men, with slow and reluctant steps. When misery is to be relieved, benefits conferred, or sins forgiven, the blessing outruns the expectation, nay, even desire. But, when the wicked are to be punished, justice seems to regret the necessity under which it is laid, and the sinner is not destroyed till, to his own conviction, his condemnation is acquitted of unrighteous-

ness, and till every thing around him calls for vengeance.

The wickedness of the old world was so great, that God is said to have “repented that he had made man.” Nevertheless after God had threatened to destroy the human race with a deluge, a reprieve of many years is granted, to afford space and means for averting the calamity by repentance. Abraham was permitted, nay, encouraged, to intercede for the sinful, the devoted cities of the plain of Jordan; and the righteousness of so small a number as FIVE persons would have saved the whole people of those regions. The nations of Canaan were not expelled, to make way for Israel; till the measure of their iniquity was full; and the haughty spirit of Pharaoh was not brought low, by wonder upon wonder, by plague upon plague, till he had hardened his heart against the power of God, and the sufferings of men, and thereby made himself a “vessel of wrath fitted for destruction.”

The awful scene we are this night to contemplate, is, in more respects than one, singular, and unexampled. We are not only presented with a series of miracles, a demonstration of the tremendous power of Almighty God, but, what is still more extraordinary, they are a series of miracles, all marked with uncommon rigour and severity. The wise and righteous Governor of the world seems, in this instance, to have deviated from the usual lenity of his proceeding; as if determined to make men tremble before him, and to stand in awe of his power and justice, as well as to hope in his mercy.

Moses and Aaron, though their former embassy to Pharaoh had met with a reception so mortifying to themselves, and so fatal to their afflicted brethren, are obliged and encouraged at God’s command to undertake a second. And the haughty tyrant having dared to reject the first, as delivered in the name of an unknown God, they are now furnished with credentials

which carried their own authority on their foreheads, and which were calculated to convince every thing but rooted infidelity, of the divine power by which they were issued. First they make reason speak. And had Pharaoh been wise, no other monitor had been necessary. But a deaf ear being turned to that meek and heavenly charmer, it becomes needful to employ a stronger and more forcible language. Being again introduced, they again deliver their message, and are again treated with scorn. Aaron, as he was commanded, having the rod of God in his hand, casts it upon the ground before Pharaoh and his court, and lo! it instantly becomes animated; it is converted into a serpent, armed with deadly poison. When Moses first beheld this strange sight, "he was afraid, and would have fled;" but Pharaoh appears not in the least alarmed. The same fire melts wax, and hardens clay; the same doctrine is the savour of life unto life in them that believe, and of death unto death in them that perish.

Some interpreters have alleged, that this transformation was not only miraculous, but emblematical, and that it was intended to humble this tyrannical and sanguinary prince, by exhibiting a representation of his own character, and of his subserviency to the power of that God whom he had presumed to defy. What a sudden and striking change, through the permission of Providence takes place! A harmless rod or shepherd's crook, the emblem of mild, wise and good government, is changed into a poisonous snake, the emblem of cruelty and oppression. And lo, at the divine pleasure, the poison is again extracted, the deadly tooth is plucked out, and the fiery serpent becomes a harmless rod again. And thus, in general, afflictive providences are either the gentle rod of a wise father to admonish, to correct and to reform; or the keen two-edged sword of an adversary to cleave asunder, to devour and not to destroy. Whether this were intend-

ed or not, it is evident Pharaoh understood it not, or disregarded it. And, as infidelity is always desirous of fortifying itself by something that has the semblance of reason; and, while it pretends to doubt of every thing, as, in truth, the most simple and credulous principle in the world, Pharaoh affects to treat the miracle which was wrought by Moses and Aaron, as a mere trick, a feat of necromancy or magic. He calls for such of his own people as professed these arts, to confront them with the Israelitish ambassadors; in order to oppose skill to skill, and to diminish the respect and attention claimed by Moses and Aaron, to their mission, and to their God, by showing similar, or equal signs, performed by Jannes and Jambres, the votaries of an Egyptian deity.

The magicians confidently undertake the task, and, through the permission of Heaven, partly succeed. The rods cast upon the ground, likewise become serpents. The heart of Pharaoh exults, and the magicians of Egypt laugh the Jewish shepherds to scorn. But the triumph of unbelief is only for a moment. Aaron's rod, in its serpent state, swallowed up their rods. Reasoning man will ask, why were not impiety and infidelity checked in their very first attempt? Why were the demons of Egypt left in possession of the slightest vestige of power, to oppose or to imitate the mighty power of God? Why grant to Pharaoh and to his magicians, even the momentary triumph of their incantations? The reason is obvious. Had the Egyptian encroachments been attended with no success, and produced no effect, infidelity would have had its plea at hand. "Your pretended miracle is mere illusion, it is an attempt to mislead our understanding, by imposing upon our senses. Though we cannot produce this particular effect, or perform this particular trick, by our art, we can effect wonders equally or much more astonishing." But, by being permitted to succeed in their first effort, and to rival Moses and Aaron

so far in power and reputation, they are insensibly drawn in to give their sanction to the sign performed by the Hebrews, for the sake of their own credit, and no sooner is it stamped for currency, with their image and superscription, than they and their abettors are confounded, by seeing the wretched impression of their art effaced, absorbed, annihilated; and no image remains visible, but that of the living and true God. The power which swallowed up the magicians' rods, could as easily have prevented the transmutation; but the confutation is much more complete by the one, than it would have been by the other. Impiety has shut her own mouth, and infidelity stands stripped of her last and only plea.

An opportunity is here presented of instituting an inquiry, which has greatly employed and violently divided the learned and ingenious; namely, whether the supernatural effects here, and elsewhere in scripture ascribed to the agency of demons and malignant spirits, through the practice of magical arts, were real miracles, that is, alterations of the known and established laws of nature, by the permission of God; or only dexterous impositions, practised by the subtle artists, on the simple and credulous, giving the appearance of reality to what had no existence? We shall not take upon us to determine, whether of these two opinions is most conformable to reason, and to the analogy of faith. But the opportunity having offered, we shall take the liberty of suggesting some considerations, tending less to settle the question, than to show that, perhaps, it is not capable of solution. But our grand aim shall be to show, that, which ever side men are pleased to take, the miracles wrought in support of truth, through the agency of the Author of all good, preserve all their superiority, and the truth itself shines in all its lustre.

And, first, if we try the cause by the *letter* of the narration of Moses, it will immediately strike every

reader, that these extraordinary facts were actually produced by the power of the devil. The history relates the change that passed on the magicians' rods, in the self-same terms, which describe the transmutation of Aaron's; and the name given to these execrable men, is the same that belongs to persons who have devoted themselves to the wicked one. On the other hand we know, that scripture, in describing natural objects, usually accommodates itself to the prevailing notions of the ages and nations in which the inspired authors lived and wrote; that it condescends even to adopt the language, the ideas, and the prejudices of the vulgar; and, that it employs, not the accurate language and just ideas of philosophy, but those of common life, in treating the greatest and most important subjects. We thence conclude, that whether the enchantments of the magicians produced real miracles, or were deceptions merely, the Spirit of God would certainly have narrated the fact in the self-same terms. From the letter of the sacred history, therefore, we can draw no conclusive argument from either side of the question.

We shall have equal reason to suspend our judgment, if we try, secondly, to decide it by the relations transmitted to us from various ages and regions of the world, concerning real or seeming enchantments. It would perhaps, be as difficult to persuade the men of our own age, that such a thing as witchcraft ever existed, as it would have been to convince our ancestors in former ages, that most of the effects ascribed to Satan and his agents, had no foundation but in the cunning, dexterity and knavery of one part of mankind, practising on the ignorance, credulity and simplicity of another. But, as it would betray a silly and ridiculous easiness of belief, on the one hand, to admit as true, the ten thousand stories, which the time of ignorance devised, related and believed; and with which our own childhood may have been scared and alarmed; so, it would certainly be an unreasonable and absurd

degree of scepticism, on the other, to reject as fabulous every relation of this sort, however well authenticated. Wise and good men have proved, by arguments amounting almost to demonstration, the absurdity of admitting the actual interference of a diabolical power in order to deceive mankind. And wise and good men, by evidence apparently as clear and satisfactory, have endeavoured to establish the certainty of such interference in particular instances. And this seems a good reason against pronouncing hastily upon the nature of the sorceries practised by the magicians of Egypt. We shall find ourselves equally in the dark, if we attempt to form our judgment in the third place, on metaphysical notions. Our minds are exceedingly limited with respect to all objects, and particularly with respect to the nature of spirits. We know, from experience, that the soul, little as it comprehends its own nature and essence, has a wonderful influence over every particle of that body to which it is united: but we can form no notion of the power and influence, which spirits of a different order may possess over larger portions of matter, and even over our bodies, and, of consequence, over our minds. Much less are we able to conceive what an extent of power the Father of spirits may, for wise purposes, have permitted to evil spirits, over the whole world of nature, which has fallen into disorder, and is labouring under the curse of Heaven, on account of man's apostacy. The limited nature of human understanding, therefore, likewise forbids us to decide too peremptorily on a subject so obviously involved in difficulty.

Finally, the principles of religion here refuse to lend us their aid. In whatever tends to convey saving light to the soul, or peace to the conscience; in all that relates to the government of the heart, or the wise conduct of the life, religion is ever at hand, and kindly offers her aid, nay, presses it upon us; but, in questions of doubtful disputation, in which men rather aim

at gratifying a restless curiosity, or wild imagination, than at improving the understanding, or mending the heart, revelation rather checks and represses inquiry, than promises or lends her assistance. It is sufficient then, for our purpose, to say, that of whatever nature were the incantations of the Egyptian magicians, and whatever their effects, the God of truth, by the hand of Moses and Aaron, put his infinite superiority beyond a possibility of doubt; and extorted an acknowledgment of it from the mouths of the magicians themselves. But, though they are put to silence, and Pharaoh is confounded, by the miracle of Aaron's rod swallowing up their rods, yet they are not brought to see the insufficiency of their art, neither is he yet reduced to yield obedience to an authority asserted by so high a hand. A miracle, therefore, which only threatened, but continued harmless; a miracle which proved fatal only to the instruments of sorcery and enchantment, failing to produce compliance, it becomes at length necessary to follow up the remonstrance of reason and humanity, and the evidence of signs, powerful indeed, yet innocent, by the operation of signs that shall be felt: signs, which shall address themselves to the understanding, and the senses, at once; and shall force conviction upon the most careless and incredulous.

Their river, Nile, was the chief ground of glorifying to the Egyptians. It was the ornament of their country, and the source of its fertility. Deriving the moisture, necessary to fructification, from thence, they vainly boasted that they were independent of the heavens; standing in no need, like the rest of the world, of the refreshing drops which fall from thence. Egypt, therefore, is first smitten, in the darling source of its pride; and that which presumptuously put itself in the place of God, first feels the power of God; and becomes, not a cause of vain-glorious boasting, but a loathing and an abomination to its worshippers. Smitten with the awful rod, its waters are instantly and uni-

versally turned into blood. Horrid change! An inundation of the river too scanty, threatened a famine: an inundation too copious, threatened a deluge. But, O dreadful reflection! the river no longer flows with that precious refreshing fluid, which gives drink and renewed vigour to thirsty man, to thirsty cattle, to the parched ground; but a fluid which taints the air; which excites abhorrence, instead of satisfying the appetite; and which kills what it contains, instead of communicating life and fruitfulness wherever it is diffused. And should it rise and swell, what is it? An abominable deluge of blood. Its streams had been often stained with the blood of human innocents; and its savage master is now punished with seeing its vast channel filled, from shore to shore, with one crimson tide. In this awful glass we are made to see, that whatsoever men exalt in the room of God and worship as God, will sooner or later become a loathing or a curse to them; and that the instrument of their sin assuredly will be converted, at length, into the instrument of their punishment.

“And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments.” Foolish, unhappy men; to try to increase an evil which was already intolerable! If their art could have done any thing, it had been more wisely employed in endeavouring to purify and sweeten those polluted streams. To succeed in multiplying blood was ruinous. The greater the power of their art, the more pernicious it was to themselves and to their country. And this is the whole extent of the boasted power of Satan: it is a power to do evil, a power to destroy: but a power destitute both of capacity and of inclination to do good. Whereas that of Heaven, though it be an ability to do evil, is an ability to this effect, which it exercises rarely, and with reluctance; whereas the doing of good, and the diffusing of happiness, is its habitual object, and its constant employment. Vain man would be independent, and sometimes boasts that

he is so; and yet, what is he? A creature sustained by bread, and refreshed by water; he lives by respiring the air which he sucks in; he depends, every instant of his existence, on the aid of every element. Let the quantity or qualities of any one of them be ever so little changed, and that moment he becomes miserable. One rainy or droughthy season makes whole nations to languish; the frost of a night destroys the hope of a year; and a single blast of wind sends mighty navies to the bottom. There is no need of a miracle to plague those whom God means to punish. All nature is at war with his adversaries: the stars in their courses fight against those who fight against God. O may we never be so mad as to provoke that Power by which we are continually supported, and from which we cannot flee!

After a chastisement so awful, who could have imagined that Pharaoh was able still to stand out? But the human heart exhibits a mystery of iniquity, which nothing but multiplied experience could render credible. The next summons has a threatening annexed to it; and the moment of refusal is to be the moment of execution. The plague threatened, being particularly specified beforehand, was likely to excite the greater alarm, and thereby to drive the offender to the means of prevention: but, it would appear, Pharaoh despised it. What, terrified at a swarm of frogs! vermin, loathsome indeed, but despicably harmless. How ignorantly do men estimate the judgments of God, when they consider only the instrument which he employs. Men effect little with large and abundant means; God performs wonders with things mean and contemptible. Is a haughty tyrant to be subdued? There is no need of more than twelve legions of angels; an army of frogs in the hand of God, is sufficient for the purpose. Again the magicians are weak enough to assist the plague; at least, they affect to lend their aid; and rather than not to be thought mighty, will seek to themselves a name by doing mischief.

Again, the river, which ministered so much to their pride, is made the minister of avenging Heaven to punish them. As its waters were lately all blood, to poison the fishes which it contained, and to taint the air, so now they are all putrefaction, to give dreadful life to an innumerable race of odious vermin, for humbling the proud. Every creature is, and does, just that which God would have it to be, and to do—it becomes either a blessing, or a curse, at his command! And, were we wise enough, to assist our weak, or to correct our erroneous vision, by the optics of the sanctuary, we should behold, under many a fair and flattering form, much loathsomeness and deformity.

Pharaoh despised this plague, while it was only threatened, but feels it to be no slight one, when it falls upon him: and he is, in this respect, the image of many a thoughtless sinner, who trifle with the judgments denounced in the word of God, till bitter experience teaches them that every arrow from the quiver of the Almighty is both penetrating and poisonous. The proud heart which refused to bend, at length begins to break; and a slow, lingering, partial, reluctant consent is given to the demand of Heaven; and permission is granted to the people to go, “that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord.” The concession, slight as it is, procures a respite. Mercy, ever on the wing, flies to succour the miserable.

We have seen Moses and Aaron executing the judgments of avenging Heaven, by the agency of a rod. Christ himself is the powerful word, by which God made and sustains worlds; the all-potent instrument to save, and to destroy. “With righteousness he shall judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked.” Moses acted by a dele-

gated power: Jesus has all power in himself. "Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant: but Christ as a son over his own house." The same Moses was the deliverer of Israel, and the scourge of Egypt: the same Jesus, who is the author of eternal salvation to them that believe, "shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire: taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." "All judgment is committed to the Son." "He shall reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet." "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Amen.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE VI.

And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God: knowest thou not yet, that Egypt is destroyed?—EXODUS x. 7.

HOW very different an appearance do objects wear, according as they are beautified and exalted by the favour of Heaven, or blasted and disfigured by the curse of an offended God! Eden, before man's apostacy; Eden fresh planted, by the sovereign hand of the Creator, contained every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, and in the midst of it was the tree of life; but O sad reverse, the fatal effect of transgression! "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee;" and the tree of life is removed to happier regions, or guarded from guilty man's approach, by the flaming sword of the cherubim. The plain of Jordan, well-watered every where, and beautiful as the garden of the Lord, delighted the eyes and allured the heart of Lot, when he separated himself from his uncle Abraham. But O how awfully changed that once delicious spot! The day when Lot went out of it, "Abraham looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah, and towards all the lands of the plain, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the coun-

try went up, as the smoke of a furnace." What a charming prospect did Egypt present in the days of her glory? Her fertile surface, covered with the silver flux of her stately, overflowing river, except where thousands of populous cities lifted up their proud heads to the skies; or, when the river retreated, her golden, luxuriant harvests waving with the fragrant wind. How changed the scene, when the Nile ran, not water, but blood; after the murrain had destroyed all their cattle; after the lightning and the hail had blasted every tree, had devoured every herb, and the "locusts had consumed what the hail had left!" What makes earth resemble heaven; and men like angels? The presence, the blessing, and the image of God! What once covered the earth with water, and shall at length destroy it by fire? What sinks men to the level of diabolical, damned spirits, and adds tenfold horror to gloomy hell? The wrath of the Almighty, and the deprivation of his glorious similitude. Nature sinks under the description and the denunciation of the divine displeasure. What must it be to endure its dreadful effects, without intermission, and without end!

Instead of going into a particular detail of the subsequent plagues wherewith God afflicted Egypt, we shall suggest a few historical and practical remarks upon the subject in general, serving to unfold the windings and the workings of the human heart, to illustrate and vindicate the ways of Providence, to expose the madness of striving against God, and to display the wisdom, the safety and the happiness of submitting readily, cheerfully and universally to the divine authority.

And, first. We observe, that as God has many inconceivable methods of doing good to men: so his power of punishing is unlimited, and the treasures of his wrath are far beyond what fear itself, which magnifies every object, can fancy. Of his glorious capa-

city and disposition to bless mankind, who has not enjoyed the sweets, and frequently repeated experience? Whose life is so short, as not to contain a history of benefits, a display of mercy, a profusion of loving-kindness, which astonish while they delight? Whose portion of felicity is so scanty, as not to exhibit wonders of goodness infinitely above the desert of angels? What understanding is so brutish, what heart so ungrateful, as not to recur, at the first call, to a multitude of special blessings, pressing upon the memory, urging prior or superior claims of acknowledgment and praise? Need you to be told, ungrateful, forgetful children of men! Need you to be told, the value of an uninterrupted and steady course of good health; or of the more sensible benefit of recovery from sickness and pain? Shall I send you back to years that are long past, or recal yesterday to your recollection? Shall I remind you of that common bounty which gives you, day by day, your daily bread; or of that singular, shall I say miraculous, interposition, which seemed to drop down manna around your tabernacle? Must all ages, and nations, and regions of the world, be made to pass in review before your eyes; or will you confine your observation to your own moment of existence, your own hand-breadth of space, your own two or three acquaintances and contemporaries, your own pittance of knowledge? Shall the glories of nature, or the wonders of Providence, be unfolded to your view? Will you contemplate the fatness and fragrancy of the fertile earth, or the vastness and brilliancy of the azure vault of heaven? Will you confine yourselves to things seen and temporal; or borne, as on the eagle's wing, contemplate things which are unseen and eternal? Will you converse with your fellow-mortals on the surface of this mole-hill, or join in the songs and raptures of angels, who surround the throne, and of the spirits of just men made perfect, immortal intelligences,

perfectly awake to the full perception of their blessedness? Choose you to dwell on the transitory comforts of the life that now is, or to anticipate the joys substantial, sincere and lasting, of that which is to come? Creation spreads her fair, her ample, her splendid page to the delighted eye. The mysterious volume, sealed to the careless reader as with seven seals, to the serious and attentive soul unveils the hidden wisdom of God, and, written with a sun-beam, there stands recorded the gracious purpose of Him who “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

Wouldst thou be satisfied, O man, that the great God has means innumerable, unutterable, incomprehensible, of conferring happiness on mankind? Think, O think, how he has loved the world, in the redemption of it by JESUS CHRIST! Think how *many* demonstrations of grace meet in the *one*, “God spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all?” And when you have ruminated on the history of redeeming love; when you have recovered from the astonishment and joy of contemplating what God *has done* for you, lose yourself afresh in the prospect of what the Lord hath *laid up* for the heirs of salvation—in the prospect of that great, exceeding and “eternal weight of glory, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and of which it hath not entered into the heart of man” to form any adequate conception or idea! Fly, O my soul, whithersoever thou wilt; settle wherever thou wilt, infinite goodness still supports thy flight, and settle thou must on the rock of ages, at last!

But, ah! my friend, this God, almighty to save, is also mighty to destroy. As his bounty is an inexhausted source of plenty to bless his friends, so his justice is a capacious quiver, stored with innumerable poisoned arrows, to shed the blood, to drink up the spirits of his adversaries. Think, in how many parts

art thou vulnerable? In every particle of thy frame, in every faculty of thy soul. Every sense opens a passage for the entrance of an avenging God. The understanding, at his command, expands to the dreadful perception of justice that will not bend; of severity that knows not to relax; of vengeance that admits not of pity. Memory, roused by that trumpet which awakes the dead, gives new form and substance to the hideous spectres of transgressions long since departed, and which were vainly imagined to be laid in the grave for ever; and the guilty wretch is dragged to the bitter recollection of what he once dwelt on with unhallowed delight, and now would feign bury in eternal oblivion; or which he gladly would, at the price of worlds, redeem from the history of his wretched life. As memory, to fulfil the righteous judgment of God, can readily summon up all that is past, in order to awaken remorse, and inspire terror; so fear launches forth into the boundless, endless regions of futurity, and rouses despair; and in the very abyss of burning hell, shudders at the thought of a deeper gulph, and of a hotter flame. Read, O sinner, the history of the plagues of Egypt, and tremble! Suppose, for a moment, the cup wherewith thou art ready to quench thy burning thirst, instantly turned into blood, to the loathing of thy soul and thy flesh. Suppose thy body struck with an universal leprosy, or the dust under thy feet quickened into abominable vermin; the air around thy head impregnated with swarms of noisome insects; the sun extinguished for three tedious lingering days, and the thunder of an angry God rolling over thy guilty devoted habitation; and suppose all this to be but the beginning of sorrow; the mere threatenings of wrath to come; wo that may be endured, torment that may expire; for ah! from yonder fearful pit arises the smoke of a fire that shall not be quenched; smoke that shall ascend for ever and ever. Their groans bursting from the bosom of des-

pair; and the rattling of everlasting, adamantine chains. Behold the wild looks, the agonizing pangs of that poor rich man, when, from the flames of his torment, he beholds Lazarus in Abraham's bosom: when he beholds heaven removed to an inaccessible distance; heaven disjoined by an unpassable gulph. Heaven, the rest of the weary, and the reward of the faithful, affords to him a momentary glimpse of its joys, only to embitter remorse, only to pierce the soul with keener pangs, and to heat the furnace seven times hotter than it was before. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

After serious reflection upon these things, our second observation would seem ill-founded, and destitute of all probability and truth, did not all history, and daily experience confirm the woful certainty of it. It is this: that by frequent indulgence, and inveterate habits of sin, the heart may at length become quite callous; may be rendered equally insensible to the calls of mercy, and the alarms of justice. We are struck with astonishment, at the sight of a poor infatuated wretch like Pharaoh, repeatedly braving that power which returned to crush and humble him, and slighting that grace which as often relented and afforded space and means for repentance. Would to God there were room to think the representation more unnatural than it is, and that the character of Pharaoh were a rarity in the world. But alas! what is the life of most men, but an habitual fighting against God? Upon whom falls the weight of our remark? Upon a few thoughtless, hardened wretches only, who have found out the secret of lulling conscience to rest, who, having conquered the sense of fear and shame, commit iniquity with greediness; who "hide not their sin like Sodom but publish it like Gomorrah?" Let us not deceive ourselves, but watch over our own hearts, and "exhort one another daily, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." There stands Pharaoh,

the daring, the presumptuous sinner; whom goodness could not mollify nor judgments subdue; and let him who is without sin cast the first stone at him. Who can flatter himself with the thought, that the errors of his life were the mere inadvertencies of haste and inattention? Who can say of himself, "This fault I corrected, as soon as I discovered it? Having been once made sensible of the danger and wickedness of that sinful course, I instantly forsook it, and have returned to it no more. Smarting from the effects of my folly, I have never again dared to provoke the lash of my Father's chastening rod. The resolutions which I made in the day of sickness and sorrow, and calamity, I have faithfully remembered, and diligently kept. Vows made at the Lord's table, I have made conscience to perform. The threatenings of God's word I have not disregarded, the long-sufferings of my God I have not abused." Alas! alas! the reverse of all this is the truth which condemns every one. Not a single, but repeated acts of intemperance, injustice, impurity, impiety; not casual and undesigned expressions, but deliberate and indulged habits of falsehood, malevolence, selfishness and uncharitableness, place *us* as criminals at the bar, by the side of Pharaoh, and forbid us to condemn him, because we also have sinned. What avails it me to say, that my offence is not the same with his? Perhaps I had neither power, nor inclination, nor opportunity, for committing that man's transgression. Have I therefore washed my hands in innocence? Can I therefore plead, "not guilty?" The great question is, Have I kept myself free from *mine own* transgression? And, spared of God to make the inquiry—let Pharaoh's impenitence, and Pharaoh's doom, awaken us to a sense of our danger; and urge a speedy flight from the wrath that is to come.

Thirdly, The history leads us to remark the great difference between the slow, reluctant, partial submission of fear, and the prompt, cheerful and unreserved

compliance of a grateful and affectionate heart. Pharaoh, like a sullen, sturdy slave, will not move a step, till stimulated by a fresh application of the whip; the moment that the pain of the stripe ceases, he stands still, or turns back. The first summons is treated by him with insolence and scorn; and he resolves that Israel shall not have a single moment's relaxation from their burthens. Brought to himself by a few strokes of the rod of God's anger, he yields a tardy consent to the intermission of their labours for a little while, and to their doing sacrifice to their God: but it must be "in the land where they dwelt, even in Egypt." That alternative being rejected, and a new demand made, backed with a new threatening, and followed with a new plague, he agrees to permit the *male* part of Israel, who were arrived at man's estate, to resort to the place appointed; but he is determined to detain their wives, children and cattle, as hostages for their return. Constrained, at length, by dint of judgments, to let the *whole* congregation depart, he endeavours to stipulate, that they should not *go very far* off; and not, till broken by the last dreadful plague, can he be brought to resign his usurped authority over the free-born sons of God.

We often find men pretending to make a merit of giving up what it is no longer in their power to retain. After a man has squandered away his means, in riot and extravagance, deserves he the praise for living sparingly? Another has ruined his constitution by intemperance; is his forced continence an object of admiration? By no means. He has discontinued his debaucheries through disability, not from inclination and conviction of his error. Old age has debilitated a third; is he therefore virtuous? No, no: his vices have forsaken *him*, not he his *vices*. When a man serves through fear, he does no more than he needs must; but love is liberal and generous, and stands not questioning, "yea hath God said?" but, ever on the watch, ever on the

wing, the moment that the voice of God is heard, it is ready to reply, "Here am I, Lord, send me." This leads me to remark,

Fourthly, The wisdom of giving up, at the command of God, with alacrity, what we must give up at last, whether we will or not. What a pitiful figure does Pharaoh make in the end! baffled in every attempt, driven out of every fortress, dishonoured in the eyes of his own servants, transmitted to the latest posterity a monument of pride and impotence.—Were not the proud man blind and infatuated, he would yield through self-love; he would submit to preserve his own consequence, at least the appearance of it. Unhappily for us, our will stands but too often in opposition to the will of God. When they come to clash, who ought in reason to give way? Who must of necessity submit? Knowest thou not, O man, that to destroy thyself, thou needest but to follow thy own headstrong inclination: knowest thou not, that the gratification, not the disappointment of illicit desire is ruinous? but who ever made a sacrifice of inclination to duty, and had reason to repent of it? Who knows not, that to yield submission is to obtain a triumph? In a contention where there is a probability, or even a possibility of our prevailing, it may be worth while to risk a combat; but who, except a madman, will seek to encounter a foe by whom he is sure to be defeated? And yet in that mad, that ruinous strife, see how many are engaged? Behold the stars in their course ranged on the part of their Creator; behold all nature standing in arms to espouse his cause; and who must be overcome? Against whom is this formidable preparation made? There stands the enemy, in all his weakness and folly; a crawling worm on a dunghill, provoking his fate, tampering with eternal ruin, hardening himself against God, and yet thinking to prosper. The influence of no malignant star is necessary to blast him: there is a necessity for no

earthquake to swallow him up: no archangel armed with a sword of fire, need descend to cut him asunder; his breath is in his own nostrils; he is sinking into his dust; his own ridiculous efforts are wasting and consuming him. Foolish creature and unwise! why wilt thou contend longer? “Wherefore shouldst thou be stricken any more? “Constrain not HIM to be thy foe who has towards thee the disposition of the best of friends, and who is mighty to save even “to the uttermost, them that come unto him.”

Fifthly, In the course of these dreadful plagues, we observe, not only the pride of man effectually humbled, but the power of Satan trampled in the dust, under the feet of the Most High. It is highly interesting to observe, by what gradual steps the enemy and the avenger is laid low, till he is at length destroyed. Presumption, at first induces him, in confidence of a permitted power, to enter the lists and to try his strength with God. Aaron's rod is turned into a serpent. The magicians attempt the same, and succeed. Their rods also become serpents. But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. By and by the water of the river is turned into blood, and the fishes die. The magicians, by their enchantments, madly assist the plague, and acquire a little transitory reputation, by doing mischief. Flushed with this farther success, they go on to imitate the miracles of Moses and Aaron; but, to their confusion, they fail there, where it seemed most probable that they should with greatest ease support their fame. That loathsome vermin, lice, is to be produced miraculously, which slovenliness and filth naturally produce without any effort. At the word of Moses, the dust of the land is transformed into this noisome, nauseous insect. But the whole power of hell cannot effect, at the time, and in the manner which it would, what time and carelessness alone, in the usual course of things, would certainly have produced; and they feel themselves attacked with a plague which their art could not bring

upon others. Finally, after having become the subjects of a miraculous calamity which might be borne, they are at length attacked with one absolutely intolerable, which drives them from the competition: they give up their silly arts of sorcery, and attempt to rival the true God no more. And thus, when the mystery of godliness shall be finished, an astonished world shall behold the sleight and devices of Satan falling upon his own head, his momentary triumphs covering him with more accumulated disgrace, and his infernal malice and diabolical craft made ministering servants to the wisdom and goodness of God. A good reason, among many others, why we should judge nothing rashly before the time till the Lord cometh, who shall bring light out of obscurity, and fully vindicate his ways to men.

Sixthly, We observe how unlike the latter ends of things are to their beginnings. The world laughs at the idea of two feeble old men, issuing forth from a desert, the patrons of liberty; to force a mighty prince, and a powerful nation, to listen to the dictates of justice and humanity, and to liberate a million of wretched creatures, whose spirits were totally broken by their miseries, and who seemed to have lost even the inclination of vindicating their own rights. Pharaoh despised them; the magicians defied them; Israel distrusted them; they themselves are ready to sink under the difficulty and danger of the enterprise. But, conducted of Heaven, they attempt, they proceed, they prosper, they overcome. They invade Egypt, two solitary, unsupported individuals! They leave it at the head of six hundred thousand men, fit to bear arms, with a corresponding number of females, besides old men and children, and a mixed multitude of non-descript persons; bidding defiance to the whole force of a wise, and populous, and warlike country. And we see them in the course of a few years taking forcible possession of one of the strongest, most impracticable and best defended countries in the world.

I need but hint to you the counterpart of this. Behold the unconnected son of a carpenter, at the head of twelve simple illiterate fishermen, attacking the religious establishments of the whole globe, and prevailing. Behold him, armed with a few plain facts, and a few doctrines as plain, overturning the whole fabric of heathen mythology and worship; ingrafting on the stock of Moses, and the legal dispensation, a scion from a nobler root; which has swallowed up the parent tree, has filled the earth with its branches, is feeding the nations to this day with its fruit, and is likely to maintain its place till all the gracious purposes of Heaven are accomplished. “It is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.” “When the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.” The next lecture will, by divine favour, exhibit the institution and celebration of the first passover, with the event which gave occasion to it. May God bless what has been spoken. To him be glory and honour for ever and ever. Amen.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE VII.

And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house.—EXODUS xii. 1—3.

IN the history of all nations, there are eras and events of a peculiar importance, which extend their influence to future ages and generations, and are fondly commemorated by latest posterity. Hence, every day of the revolving year becomes, in its course, to one people or another, the anniversary of something memorable which befel their forefathers, and is remembered by their sons with triumph or with sorrow. Most of the religious observances which have obtained in the world, when traced up to their source, are found to originate in providential dispensations; and history thereby becomes the best interpreter of customs and manners. It is a most amusing employment, to observe the operation and progress of the human mind in this respect; and to consider how variously different men, and at different periods, have contrived to transmit to their children the memory of similar achievements, successes, or disasters. A great stone set up

on end, a heap of stones, a mound of earth, and the like, were, in the earlier, ruder, simpler state of the world, the monuments of victory; and to dance around them with songs, on an appointed day, was the rustic commemoration of their rude and simple posterity.—The triumphs and the deaths of heroes came, in process of time, to be remembered with conviviality and mirth, or with plaintive strains and solemn dirges.—The hoary bard varied and enlightened the feast, by adapting to his rough voice or rougher harp the uncouth rhymes which he himself had composed, in praise of departed gallantry and virtue. As arts were invented and improved, the wise, the brave, and the good were preserved from oblivion by monuments more elegant, more intelligible, and more lasting. A more correct style of poetry, and a sweeter melody were cultivated. Sculpture and painting conveyed to children's children an exact representation of the limbs and lineaments of the venerable men who adorned, who instructed, who saved their country. And thus, though dead, they continued to live and act in the animated canvas, in the breathing brass, or the speaking marble. At length, the pen of the historian took up the cause of merit, and diffused over the whole globe, and handed down to the very end of time the knowledge of the persons and of the actions which should never die.

We are this evening to bestow our attention upon an institution altogether of divine appointment, intended to record an event of singular importance to the nation immediately affected by it, and which, according to its intention and its consequences, has involved a great part of mankind.

Moses and Aaron having, as the instruments in the hand of Providence, chastised Egypt with nine successive and severe plagues, inflicted in the view of procuring Israel's release, are at length dismissed by the unrelenting tyrant, with a threatening of certain death,

should they ever again presume to come into his presence. Moses takes him at his word, and bids him a solemn, a long, and everlasting farewell. When men have finally banished from them their advisers and monitors, and when God has ceased to be a reprover to them, their destruction cannot be very distant. Better it is to have the law to alarm, to threaten and chastise us, than to have it in anger altogether withdrawn. Better is a conscience that disturbs and vexes than a conscience laid fast asleep, than a conscience "seared as with a hot iron."

What solemn preparation is made for the tenth and last awful plague of Egypt! God is about to reckon with Pharaoh and his subjects, for the blood of the Israelitish male children, doomed from the womb to death by his cruel edict. His eye pitied not nor spared the anguish of thousands of wretched mothers, bereaved of their children the instant they were born; and a righteous God pities, spares him not, in the day of visitation.

The circumstances attending this tremendous calamity are strikingly calculated to excite horror. First, God himself is the immediate author of it. Hitherto he had plagued Egypt by means and instruments; "stretch out thy hand:" "Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth thy hand with thy rod." But now it is, "I will go out into the midst of Egypt." "And it came to pass that at midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle." As mercies coming immediately from the hand of our heavenly Father are sweeter and better than those which are communicated through the channel of the creature; so judgments, issuing directly from the stores of divine wrath are more terrible and overwhelming. The sword of an invading foe is a dreadful thing, but infinitely more dreadful is the sword

of a destroying angel, or the uplifted hand of God himself.

Secondly, The nature and quality of the calamity greatly increase the weight of it. It is a wound there where the heart is most susceptible of pain; an evil which undermines hope; hope, our refuge and our remedy under other evils. The return of another favourable season, may repair the wastes and compensate the scarcity of that which preceded it. A body emaciated or ulcerated all over, may recover strength, and be restored to soundness; and there is hope that the light of the sun may return, even after a thick darkness of three days. But what kindness of nature, what happy concurrence of circumstances, can re-animate the breathless clay, can restore an only son, a first-born, stricken with death?

The universality of this destruction is a third horrid aggravation of its woe. It fell with equal severity on all ranks and conditions; on the prince and the peasant; on the master and the slave. From every house the voice of misery bursts forth. No one is so much at leisure from his own distress as to pity, soothe or relieve that of his wretched neighbour.

Fourthly, The blow was struck at the awful midnight hour, when every object assumes a more sable hue; when fear, aided by darkness, magnifies to a gigantic size, and clothes in a more hideous shape the real and fantastical, the seen and the unseen disturbers of silence and repose. To be prematurely awakened out of sleep by the dying groans of a friend suddenly smitten, to be presented with a ghastly image of death in a darling object lately seen and enjoyed in perfect health, to be forced to the acknowledgment of the great and holy Lord God, by such an awful demonstration of his presence and power! what terror and astonishment could equal this?

The keen reflection that all this accumulated distress might have been prevented, was another cruel in-

gredient in the embittered cup. How would they now accuse their desperate madness, in provoking a power, which had so often and so forcibly warned them of their danger? If Pharaoh were not past feeling, how dreadful must have been the pangs which he felt, while he reflected, that after attempting to destroy a hapless, helpless race of strangers, who lay at his mercy, by the most unheard-of cruelty and oppression, he had now ruined his own country, by an obstinate perseverance in folly and impiety; that he had become the curse and the punishment of a nation, of which he was bound by his office to be the father and protector; and that his own hopes were now blasted in their fairest, most flattering object, the heir of his throne and empire, because he regarded not the rights of humanity and mercy in the treatment of his vassals.

Finally, if their anguish admitted of a still higher aggravation, the distinction from first to last made between them and Israel, the blessed exemption which the oppressed Hebrews had enjoyed from all these calamities, especially from this last death, must have been peculiarly mortifying and afflictive. "But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast; that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel." This partakes of the nature of that misery which the damned endure; who are represented as having occasional, distant and transitory glimpses of the blessedness of heaven, only for their punishment, only to heighten the pangs of their own torments. Of the approach of their other woes, these unhappy persons had been repeatedly warned. But this, it would appear, came upon them suddenly and in a moment. They had gone to rest in security. The short respite which they enjoyed from suffering had stilled their apprehension; "surely," said they, "the bitterness of death is past." But ah! it is only the deceitful calm which precedes the hurricane or the earthquake. Let

men never dream of repose from the righteous judgment of God, whatever they may have already endured, till they have forsaken their sins, and fled for refuge in the divine mercy.

It is now worth while to consider the notice given to God's own people of this approaching evil, and the means which were appointed and employed to secure them from being involved in the general ruin. The event so destructive to Egypt, was intended to be the era of their liberty, and the means of their deliverance. They had hitherto reckoned the beginning of their year from the month Tisri, which answers to our September; which, as they supposed, was the time when the creation was begun and completed; but they are now positively enjoined to begin to reckon from the month Abib or Nisan, that is March, in memory of a new creation; whereby their condition was totally changed, from servitude of the most abject kind, into freedom the most exalted and perfect, even the glorious liberty of the sons of God. They are distinctly informed of the stroke which Providence was meditating against Egypt, and of the precise time when the blow was to be struck. They are accordingly directed to two things; First, to provide for their own safety; and Secondly, to hold themselves in perfect readiness to take advantage of the permission to depart, which the panic occasioned by the death of the first-born should extort from Pharaoh. For the former of these purposes, every particular family, or the two adjoining, in proportion to their numbers, the lowest, according to the Jewish writers, being not under ten, nor the highest above twenty, were commanded to choose out, and to set apart, every household, a male lamb, or kid, of a particular description, on the tenth day of the month, and to kill it on the evening of the fourteenth. The flesh of the victim was commanded to be eaten by every several household apart, roasted with fire. They were all enjoined carefully to keep within their houses.

And the blood of the sacrifice was to be taken and sprinkled on the two side-posts, and the upper door-posts of every house where it was eaten. This sprinkling of the blood was to be the token of God's covenant, and a protection to the families so distinguished, from the sword of the avenging angel.

But, a positive institution so immediately from Heaven, an institution so full of meaning and instruction, of such celebrity in the history of the world, and connected so closely with an ordinance of still greater notoriety, and of much more extensive influence, an ordinance of much longer duration, and which commemorates an event of infinitely greater importance, surely demands the most minute attention, and the most serious inquiry. We pretend not to comprehend, and therefore undertake not to explain every particular circumstance of this solemn, divine institution: but the moral and religious design is, in general, so obvious, that a reader of ordinary capacity has but to run over with a common degree of seriousness and attention, in order to understand what the spirit of God is saying in it, for the edification of mankind.

And first, God was about to distinguish Israel by special marks of his favour. In order to this, they must carefully distinguish themselves by a punctual observance of his command. Is more expected of an Israelite than of an Egyptian? Undoubtedly. The blessings which come down from above, from the Father of lights, are not mere arbitrary and capricious effusions of liberality, falling upon one spot, and passing by another, without reason or design. No, they are the wise and gracious recompense of an intelligent, observing and discriminating Parent, to faithful, affectionate and obedient children. Israel had been forewarned of the ensuing danger to no purpose, had one iota or tittle relating to the ordinance of the paschal lamb been neglected. Calamity is to be avoided, not by foreknowing that it draws nigh, but by running to

a place of safety. Salvation by Christ consists, not merely in head-knowledge of his person, doctrine and work; but in a cordial receiving and resting upon him alone for salvation, as he is freely offered to us in the gospel, for "wisdom, righteousness and sanctification, and redemption." The careful selection, then, of a proper victim, and the exact application of it, according to the commandment, have a plain and an instructive meaning.

Secondly, As Israel was to depart in haste, the Spirit of God was pleased to enjoin a memorial of that haste, in the quality of the bread which they were to use, during the celebration of this festival. When liberty, dear liberty is in view, who so silly as to care whether the taste be gratified or not, for a few days, with a less palatable kind of food? Our most perfect enjoyments in this world, and our highest attainments, have a mixture of bitterness or of insipidity attending them: like the flesh of lambs eaten with bitter herbs, and unfermented bread. The Jews, we know, were singularly diligent and curious, in searching out and removing from their houses every thing leavened, during this sacred season. With superstitious scrupulousness, they prepared unleavened bread for themselves, and the poor, for months before the solemn day arrived. A few days previous to the feast they cleansed all their vessels and furniture. What could stand the fire, they purified with fire; what could not, they dipped in or rinsed with water. Their marble mortars they had hallowed anew. The night preceding the day of unleavened bread, they lighted wax tapers, and prepared for a general search after every remainder of leaven. The master of the family began the ceremony with this solemn address to God; "blessed art thou, O Lord, who hast commanded us to put away all that is leavened out of our houses." All the males of the household; master, children, domestics, assisted in searching the whole house over,

and examined into the most secret corners, lest peradventure some lurking particle of leavened bread, or fermented dough, might have been overlooked, in order to its being destroyed. As if this had not been sufficient, that the family might be purged of at least all intentional violation of the commandment, the father of it concluded the search with this solemn execration: "Let all the leaven that is in my house, and which I have not been able to find out or to remove, be scattered, and become like the smallest dust of the earth." An inspired apostle is our interpreter of this part of the paschal observance; so that we can be at no loss about the meaning of the Spirit in its institution. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven; neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth," 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. The scrupulous exactness of the Jews, in their literal obedience to the commandment, is a severe and just reproof of many, too many professing christians, who rush to the celebration of the gospel passover with little preparation or seriousness; and some, alas! deliberately hoarding up in their hearts, and secretly, greedily feeding upon "the old leaven of malice and wickedness."

Thirdly, the victim itself claims our most serious attention. "A male lamb, of the first year,"—"without blemish," to be taken, on the tenth day of the month, from his dam, kept apart for four days, and then killed! These are all tender and touching considerations. "A lamb;" The most innocent and gentle of animals, in the idea and the language of all ages and nations, another name for gentleness, harmlessness and simplicity; removed early from its only comfort and protection, its fond mother's side; deprived of liberty, and destined to bleed by the sacrificing knife.

Who can think of his plaintive bleatings, during the days of separation, without being melted? What Israelitish heart so insensible, as not to yearn at the thought, that his own life, and the comfort of his family, were to be preserved, at the expense of the life of that inoffensive little creature, whom he had shut up for the slaughter, and which, in unsuspecting confidence, licked the hand lifted up to shed its blood?

We have not long to search for the spirit and substance of this part of the institution: for all scripture presses upon our notice, the “LAMB OF GOD, who taketh away the sins of the world;” slain, “in the eternal purpose, from and before the foundation of the world; holy, harmless, and undefiled;” “delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God,” Acts ii. 23—suffering “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” “Who was wounded for *our* transgressions, who was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed:” the Lord laying on him “the iniquity of us all;” withdrawn, separated from the bosom of his Father—delivered into the hands of men—pouring out his soul unto death.

It was to be “a lamb of *the first year*,” eight days old at the least; a year at the most. Not less than eight days, say the Jews, that there might intervene one sabbath from the birth of the victim, and that so the sacredness of this holy festival might render it worthy of being offered unto God. More probably, because that, till then, the animal was considered as too near a state of imperfection or impurity. It was not to exceed one year; because to that age it retains its lamblike harmlessness and simplicity. Superstition, which is ever sinking the spirit in the letter, has asserted, that a single hour beyond the year vitiated the victim, and rendered it profane.

But the figure, without straining for a resemblance, presents unto us JESUS, “a Son born, and a Saviour

given:" ours from the manger, ours to the tomb. His days cut off in the midst; at that period of life when men are coming to their prime of vigour, beauty and usefulness. "A lamb without blemish." Those who love to fritter away the spirit and meaning of divine institutions in literal interpretation, have gone into a particular enumeration of the various kinds of blemishes which disqualified a sacrifice upon this occasion; and these they have multiplied to considerably above fifty. And what folly has taken pains to invent, superstition has been idle and weak enough to follow. The latter Rabbins tell us, that the lamb was set apart for four days before the sacrifice, in order to afford leisure and opportunity to inquire into its soundness and perfection; that if any unobserved spot should appear, there might be time to reject it, and to substitute another in its room. The law itself is plain and simple; and no good Israelite, of common sense, with the sacred character in his hand, could possibly mistake its meaning; which is simply to signify, that the good God is to be served with the choicest and best of every thing. But the law evidently looked further than to the mere corporal perfection or defects of a silly lamb; and we should but ill understand both the text and the commentary, did we not look through the whole type to HIM who is "without spot or blemish;" who though born of a sinful mother, "did no sin;" who lived many years in the "midst of a sinful and adulterous generation," without contracting any taint of moral pollution; in whom "the prince of this world, when he came, found nothing;" and whom his agents, Judas and Pontius Pilate, the instruments of his condemnation and death, were constrained to acquit. "I have sinned, and betrayed innocent blood," said the one. "Take ye him and crucify him, for I find no fault in him," said the other. "And when the centurion saw what was done he said, Surely this was the Son of God!"

The very act of *selecting* the one victim from among many, must have been an affecting office. Why should this innocent creature bleed and die, rather than another? Why should the notice of my eye, or his accidentally presenting himself the first of the flock, or his superior beauty and strength, or the determination of the lot, doom him, in preference, to the slaughter? But one *must* die. Here the choice is fixed; and pity must not spare what Heaven has demanded. These emotions of compassion must have been frequently excited during the four days of separation. The plaintive bleating, issuing from a tender, aching heart, robbed at once of its natural food, protection and comfort; feeling the bitterness of death in the deprivation of maternal care and tenderness; the mournfully pleasing employment of supplying the devoted victim with aliment, up to the appointed hour; the cherishing and sustaining with solicitude, that life to-day, which the strong hand of necessity must take away to-morrow; all these awakening a thousand undescribable feelings. How the heart is wrung, as often as the eye, or the ear, or the hand, is attracted to attend or to minister to the little trembling prisoner! At length the fatal moment is come; and the afflicting alternative presses, “This innocent, or my own first-born must suffer. If my heart relent, lo, the flaming sword of the destroying angel is within my habitation. My resolution is formed. There is no room for deliberation. Die thou, that my son may live.”

But the paschal victim could have no presentiment of its approaching fate. Happy in its ignorance, it could die but once. Christians, need your eyes be directed to your great gospel passover? Behold, your atonement—deliberately chosen of God; fixed upon, in the maturity of eternal counsels; under the pressure of the great decree; voluntarily presenting and surrendering himself!—Behold him continually admonished of his approaching sufferings and death; by his

own divine presence, by the perpetual insults and violence of wicked men, by the descent of Moses and Elias to the mount of transfiguration. "The decease which he should accomplish at length at Jerusalem," was continually assuming a blacker and a blacker complexion, from being foreseen, foreknown, and more keenly felt, as the hour drew nigh. Lo, he "treads the wine-press alone." The dreadful conflict is begun. What "strong crying with tears" do I hear? "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."—What "great drops of blood" do I see distilling from every pore, and "falling to the ground?" Ah! the unrelenting executioner has begun to perform his infernal task: and yet, the bleeding "Lamb opens not his mouth." What sigh is that which pierces my soul? What strange accents burst upon my astonished ear? "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" The conflict is at an end. He bows his head, "It is finished." The victim has "poured out his soul unto death." He has given up the ghost. These "things the angels desire to look into."

"O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and love of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Who can "comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and height:" who "can know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge!" Amen.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE VIII.

And it shall come to pass when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.—EXODUS xii. 26, 27.

WITH PSALM xci. 5—8.

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

THE great JEHOVAH, in all the works of his hands, and in all the ways of his providence, is ever preparing still grander displays of his divine perfection than those which have been already submitted to our view. This visible creation, fair, and vast, and magnificent as it is, being composed of perishing materials,

and destined in the eternal plan, to a temporary duration, is passing away, to give place to "new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." He who made all things at first saith, "Behold, I make all things new." The whole Jewish ceremony, "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises:" the patriarchs and the prophets, with all they said, acted and wrote, were but "the preparation of the gospel of peace;" and all issue in Christ the Lord, "in whom all the promises are yea, and amen, to the glory of God the Father." And the kingdom of *grace*, under the great Redeemer, is only leading to the kingdom of *glory*.

It is both pleasant and useful, to observe the nature, the occasion and the design of sacred institutions. A closer inspection generally discovers much more than is apparent at first sight. The ordinance of the passover owes its institution to an event of considerable importance in the history of mankind; and its abrogation to a still greater. Its celebration commemorates the destruction of all the first-born in Egypt, and the redemption of Israel. Its abolition marks that most memorable era, the death of God's own eternal Son, and the redemption of a lost world, by the shedding of his precious blood. It is not therefore to be wondered at, if in an ordinance which was intended to expire in the sacrifice of the great "Lamb of Atonement, slain from the foundation of the world," its divine Author should have thought proper to enjoin many particulars which figuratively and symbolically pointed out "good things to come," as well as literally expressed good things present.

Several of these significant circumstances, we took occasion to point out to you in the last Lecture. The commencement of the year was changed. The memory of nature's birth was sunk as it were in the memory of the church's deliverance; and a joyful ex-

pectation was excited of the gradual approach of "the fulness of time," the day, the new year's day of the world's redemption. In that sacred festival was seen God drawing nigh to his Israel, in loving kindness, tender mercy and faithfulness; and Israel drawing nigh to their God, in gratitude, love and obedience. The feast was prepared by the removal of all leaven, the emblem of "malice and wickedness;" and eaten with unleavened bread, the emblem of "sincerity and truth." The victim was appointed to be "a lamb of the first year, without blemish," chosen from among the flock, set apart and killed, to preserve the life of him who poured out, and sprinkled its blood; the figure of Him who was to come; "the Lamb of God, who beareth the sin of the world;" holy, harmless, gentle, patient; "delivered according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God;" "suffering, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." We are now to continue the subject.

All Israel was engaged in the same service at the same instant of time, and for the selfsame reason. All had descended from the same common stock, all were included within the bond of the same covenant, all were involved in the same general distress, all were destined of Heaven to a participation in the same salvation. They appear, in the paschal solemnity, a beautiful and an instructive representation of the great, united, harmonious family of God: who are "one body, one spirit, and are called in one hope of their calling:" who have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism—one God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in all." And they are all coming, "in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6, 13.

As the church in general had one and the same sacrifice, a lamb of the description which has been

mentioned; so every particular family or neighbourhood, according to their number, had their own particular sacrifice, and in that their particular protection and repast. The charity which comprehended the whole Israel of God, was thus invigorated and enlivened by being collected and concentered; and the sacred fire of love, which was in danger of being extinguished by being dispersed too extensively, being thus confined within a narrower circle, lighting on fewer and nearer objects, and aided by reciprocal sympathy and ardour, was blown up into a purer flame. A happy prefiguration of the blessed influence of the gospel, and of its sacred institutions, to rectify, to rivet, and to improve the charities of private life; to shed peace and joy upon every condition and relation; gradually to expand the heart, through the progressive, continually enlarging circles of natural affection, friendship, love of country, love of mankind, love to ALL the creation of God.

What must it have been to an Israelitish parent, standing with his children around him, to eat the Lord's passover, to reflect, that while the arrows of the Almighty were falling thick upon the tents of Ham, *his* tabernacle was secured from the stroke: that while all the first-born in Egypt were bleeding by the hand of the destroying angel: of *him*, a holy and righteous God demanded no victim, but one from the flock; spared a darling son, and accepted the blood of a lamb! What must have been the emotions of the Israelitish first-born themselves, at that awful hour, to reflect on the state of their unhappy neighbours, of the same description with themselves, and on their own condition, had justice, untempered with mercy, struck the blow! Such as this, but superior, as the deliverance is greater, must be the joy of a truly christian family, which has hope in God through Christ Jesus the Lord, in reflecting on that grace which has made a difference between them and their sinful neighbours; which has sea-

sonably warned them “to flee from the wrath that is to come;” which has “delivered their souls from death, their eyes from tears, their feet from falling.” What must be the inexpressible satisfaction of every believer in Christ Jesus, in the confidence of being sprinkled with the blood of atonement, of “being at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” of being “passed from death unto life?” What a happy community is the redeemed of the Lord! Wherever scattered on the face of the whole earth; they are nevertheless gathered together in their glorious Head: separated by oceans and mountains, but united in interest and affection: hated, despised, persecuted of the world; yet cherished, esteemed, protected of the Almighty!

The sacrifices of the Mosaic dispensation were *many*, because they were imperfect. The sacrifice of the gospel is *ONE*, because once offered it “for ever perfects them that are sanctified by it.” The ancient institution prescribed a whole lamb for every several family; the gospel exhibits a whole and complete Saviour for every several elect sinner: and that Saviour at once a teacher, an atonement, a ruler; “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.”

The *application* of the blood of the destined victim in this institution is a most remarkable circumstance. “They shall take of the blood and strike it on the two side-posts, and on the upper door-post of the houses wherein they shall eat it.” It must not be split upon the ground as a worthless thing, nor sprinkled in the entering of the door, to be trampled upon as an unholy thing; but above and on either side; to be a covering to the head and a bulwark around. “When I see the blood I will pass over you.” Could the all-discerning eye of God stand in need of such a token, in order to judge between an Israelite and an Egyptian? No. But the distinctions of God’s love avail not them who wilfully and wickedly neglect the dis-

tinctions of faith and obedience. The blood in the bason is the same with the blood on the door post; but it is no protection till it be believably applied.—The virtue is dormant till sprinkling call it forth. Surely this part of the ceremony speaks to the christian world for itself. Why is mention still made of blood, blood? “the shedding of blood,” “the sprinkling of blood,” “redemption through blood,” and the like? It denotes the life, which consists in the blood of the animal; and it instructs us in this momentous doctrine, that life being forfeited by sin, the blood must be shed, that is, the life must be yielded up, before atonement to justice can be made: that the substitution and acceptance of one life in the room of another, must depend upon the will and appointment of the offended lawgiver: that the blood of slain beasts, having no value nor virtue of its own to take away sin, must derive all its efficacy from the appointment of Heaven, and from its relation to a victim of a higher order: and that the blood or life of this ONE victim, yielded up to divine justice, is through its intrinsic worth and the decree of God, of virtue sufficient to take away the sins of the whole world.

But as, in the original institution, the blood of the lamb slain was no protection to the house, till it was sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop on the parts of the building, and the manner directed, so the sovereign balm appointed of the Most High for the cure of the deadly plague of sin, the price of pardon to the guilty, the life of the dead, becomes effectual to the relief of the guilty, perishing sinner, by a particular application of it to his own “wounds, bruises, putrifying sores.” Faith, eying the commandment, the power of God and the grace of Christ, is like the bunch of hyssop in the hand of the paschal worshipper, sprinkling the blood of atonement upon “the upper door-post, and the two side-posts,” the understanding, the heart, the life, the ruling and the governed powers of our na-

ture, that the whole may be accepted through the Beloved.

I conclude this part of my subject with quoting a passage from the Targum of Jonathan, respecting the sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb, as it was performed by the children of Israel in Egypt, which has struck myself as uncommonly beautiful and sublime.

“ When the glory of the Lord was revealed in Egypt in the night of the passover, and when he slew all the first-born of the Egyptians, he rode upon lightning. He surveyed the inmost recesses of our habitations; he stopped behind the walls of our houses; his eyes observed the posts of our doors: they pierced through the casements. He perceived the blood of circumcision, and the blood of the paschal lamb, sprinkled upon us. He viewed his people from the heights of heaven, and saw them eating the passover roasted with fire: he saw, and had compassion upon us; he spared, and suffered not the destroying angel to hurt us.”

The inferior circumstances respecting the sacrifice are these. The flesh of the victim was to be eaten in the night season, not in a crude state nor boiled in water, but roasted with fire; no bone of it was to be broken; no remnant of it left until the morning; or else the remains were to be consumed by fire. I am unwilling entirely to pass over these circumstances as if they were of no especial meaning or importance; for I am thoroughly convinced every iota and tittle relating to this ordinance, has a specific meaning and design. But I frankly acknowledge I cannot discern that design in every particular; and am far from being satisfied with the fanciful and unsupported illustrations of some commentators upon the passage. Should I myself seem to any to have given too much into imagination and conjecture in my ideas of it, or in what is farther to be offered; the nature of the sub-

ject, the silence of scripture, the consciousness of honestly aiming at your rational entertainment and religious instruction, and the humble hope that these conjectures are and shall be conformed to the analogy of faith, and if erroneous, innocently so; these will, I am persuaded, secure me a patient hearing, and a candid interpretation.

The time of the feast was the night season; the very juncture when the awful scene was acting, which marred the glory and blasted the strength of Egypt. Inconsiderate man must have his attention roused and fixed by strong and striking circumstances. The moment of execution, the hour of battle, and the like, are awfully interesting to a serious, humane and public-spirited person. Every son of Israel knew, that at the very moment he was eating his unleavened cake with gladness, and the flesh of lambs with a merry heart, “thousands were falling at his side, and ten thousand at his right hand.” What an alarming demonstration of divine justice! What an encouraging display of goodness and mercy! Were the eye opened to see God as he is, were the powers of an invisible world habitually felt, every creature, every season, every event, would possess a quickening, an active, a constraining influence over us. But blind, stupid, sluggish as we are, the midnight bell must toll to rouse us to reflection: death must assume the complexion of sable night, and add artificial to natural horror, in order to force a way into our stony hearts. And God, who knows what is in man, vouchsafes to instruct his thoughtlessness and folly, by acting through the medium of powerful and awakening circumstances upon our imagination and senses. Hence possibly the injunction to eat the pass-over by night.

It was to be “roasted with fire,” not eaten raw, nor sodden with water. To eat flesh in a crude state is unnatural and unwholesome. And we never find the religious institutions of the living and true God

doing violence to innocent natural propensities and aversions, or encroaching on the health and life of his worshippers: for he saith, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." "Why the one method of preparing it was commanded of God in preference to the other, we pretend not satisfactorily to account for.— Was it to secure an uniformity of practice in the minutest circumstances relating to his worship? Was it to form his church and people to implicit obedience to his will, in points which they comprehend not, as in those which they well understand; in all cases whatever, whether he be pleased to render to or withhold a reason? Was it intended as a symbolical representation of their late condition; tried, and prepared, and refined in the fire of Egyptian oppression; purged, but not consumed by it? Was it a figurative view of the judgment of God then executing: Egypt scorched with the flame; Israel enlightened, seasoned, purified by it? Did it look forward unto, and signify some particular circumstance in the person, the doctrine, or sufferings of the great evangelical sacrifice? O Lord, thou knowest. "Secret things belong to thee, but things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children." We thank thee for what thou hast condescended to reveal to us, and would not presume to "be wise above what is written."

"Not a bone" of the paschal lamb was to "be broken." This, as well as some of the foregoing circumstances, is by sundry commentators supposed to be intended as a contradiction to various Pagan superstitions, and particularly to the frantic behaviour of the votaries of Bacchus; who, in the fumes of intoxication or of religious phrenzy, committed a thousand abominations and extravagancies; they fell into violent agitations, the pretended inspiration of their God; they devoured the yet palpitating flesh of the victims which they had just killed, and broke all their bones to pieces. But the idolatrous rites of the heathen na-

tions were so various and so contradictory one to another, that we can hardly imagine the great JEHOVAH would condescend to express any concern, whether the rites of his worship, were, in every instance, either conformed or opposed to the usages of idolatry. A very famous critic* assigns a very silly reason for this branch of the commandment. He alleges it was another indication of the extreme haste with which the passover was to be eaten. "Men in a hurry," says he, "do not stand to pick bones; much less do they take leisure to break them, for the sake of the juice or marrow." As if it required more time to sever the joints, and break the bones by violence, than to dissect and disunite the parts without a fracture. The simple meaning of the precept seems to be, that what once is offered to God should not be unnecessarily disfigured and mangled. The blood must be shed, for that was the seal of God's covenant; the flesh might be eaten, for it was given for the sustenance of man's life; but the bones, forming no part either of food or sacrifice, were to be left in the state in which they were found, till consumed by fire with the remainder of the flesh, if any remained, the next morning. And is it not extremely probable, that God might intend, by certain arbitrary tokens, to describe the Messiah; and that the prohibition to break the bones of the paschal lamb was designed to be a type of a remarkable circumstance attending the crucifixion of our Saviour, which Providence watched over with special attention, and brought about by a miracle? "But when the soldiers came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs," John xix. 33. And it is clear from what follows, that the evangelist considered the precept of the law as a prophecy of Christ; "For these things were done," says he, "that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not

* Bochart, Hieroz, par. i. lib. ii. cap. l. sol. 609.

be broken," Verse 36. In many cases it happens, that the prediction was either not attended to, or had not been understood, till the event has explained it.

Nothing of it was to be "left until the morning." This circumstance was not peculiar to the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, but common to almost every other kind of oblation. This will appear if we consult the general laws respecting sacrifice. Thus the prescription runs: "and the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day that it is offered; he shall not leave any of it until the morning," Lev. vii. 15. And again, "When a bullock, or a sheep, or a goat is brought forth, then it shall be seven days under the dam; and from the eighth day and henceforth it shall be accepted for an offering made by fire unto the Lord. And whether it be cow, or ewe, ye shall not kill it and her young both in one day. And when ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the LORD, offer it at your own will. On the same day it shall be eaten up, ye shall leave none of it until the morrow: I am the Lord," xxii. 27—30. The solemn affix, "I am the LORD," seems to insinuate, that the reason of the commandment was to be sought in the majesty and authority of the lawgiver. And, independent of authority, decency seems to require, that what has once been devoted to a hallowed use should never afterwards appear in a mangled, impure or putrid state. Perhaps superstition was, by this precept, obliquely or intentionally reproved and repressed; superstition, which loves to feed upon scraps, and to hoard up relics, as if they were sacred things; superstition, which gives to the fragments of the sacrifice the veneration due only to the sacrifice itself, and to the great Author of it.

We must notice the remaining particulars of this service in the manner in which it was originally performed, "in haste," "standing," "with loins girded," "with staff in hand," ready to depart. The lamb

was to be eaten with "bitter herbs." A representation, perhaps, of the mixed nature of every sublunary enjoyment, and of the wholesome uses of unpalatable adversity. The "standing" posture, and the implements of travelling, speak a plain and distinct language. "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest." "Here we have no abiding city, but look for one to come." "Now we desire a better country, that is an heavenly." "Arise let us go hence." A provision was graciously made for such as might be ceremonially unclean at the future seasons of celebration, and the door of mercy and communion was opened to strangers. Blessed prefiguration of the remedy provided for the chief of sinners; of the refuge opened for the reception of "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel;" of the liberal, condescending, comprehensive spirit of the gospel! Christians, ye "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." "Those who were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

Men and brethren, the time is at hand, when a more fearful midnight cry shall be heard than even that which smitten, groaning Egypt raised in the hour of vengeance. "The day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night." "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." Behold, a careless, slumbering world, a world lying in wickedness, is threatened with a death infinitely more dreadful than that which destroyed the first-born, with "the second death," a living death of everlasting banishment "from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." From that last plague there is no security but one; that security, of which the "blood of sprinkling" under the law was but a type. "Run to your strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." "Flee, flee for refuge: lay hold of the hope that is set before you." "Behold now is

the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us," Rom. viii. 32, 33, 34.

How many things in the scriptures; in Moses, in the prophets, in the law, in the gospel, are dark and hard to be understood? But the hour cometh when the veil shall be removed from our eyes; when the truth as it is in Jesus shall stand confessed without a mystery; and shall be seen and read of all men. "What" he doth, "ye know not now, but ye shall know hereafter." "We know in part, and we prophecy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know, even as also I am known," I Cor. xiii. 12.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE IX.

And it came to pass when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him; for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you. And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them, by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.—EXODUS xiii. 17—22.

ALL that weak, ignorant, erring man can know, is a few of the smaller objects which are immediately around him; and of these but a few of the more obvious qualities which they possess, and the relations in which they stand to one another. Remove them but a little as to space or time, and they gradually disappear, till they are at length involved in total darkness. The distance of a few leagues terminates our vision; the lapse of a few years erases all traces from our memory. The cloud of night conceals or changes the

appearance of things the nearest to us, and the most perfectly known. Here, we are dazzled and confounded by an excess of light; there, we are checked and repulsed by dimness and obscurity. The sun forbids us to behold his face by reason of his splendor; the earth and the ocean present to us but their surface; and the heavens oppose to their eager eye a vault of crystal, saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther." We feel ourselves hedged in, fettered, confined on every side. And our condition in this respect is that of every created, limited being. Open prospect after prospect; expand system upon system; add faculty to faculty: yet the prospect is bounded at length. Suns and worlds are capable of being numbered, and there is a height and depth still beyond, which the understanding of an angel cannot fathom.

There is only ONE Being whose duration is immeasurable—whose space is unconfined—whose power is uncontrolled—whose understanding is infinite. With JEHOVAH "a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years." He alone can "declare the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure," Isa. xlvi. 10. HE is "above all, and through all, and in all!" An impenetrable veil hides futurity from every created eye; but the spirit of prophecy is pleased sometimes to remove it. Abraham saw the Redeemer's day afar off, and rejoiced. He saw in prophetic vision the servitude, the affliction, and the deliverance of his posterity, at the distance of four hundred years. To mortal man, whose longest span of existence is diminished to much under a century, four hundred years have something like the appearance of an eternity; but before God time and space are contracted to a point, to a moment. With him, that which is to be done is already done. Men shape events according to their fancy, their fears, their wishes or their hopes. But

“ the counsel of the Lord it shall stand, and he fulfill-eth all his pleasure.”

What was the *word* of the Lord to Abraham? “ And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety, that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance,” Gen. xv. 13, 14. What *was* the doing of the Lord in conformity to that word? “ And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle.” “ And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses: and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment. And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required: and they spoiled the Egyptians.” Israel came into Egypt few in number, weak and indigent; but they go out from the land of their oppression greatly increased, mighty and formidable; laden with the spoils of their cruel oppressors, the well-earned reward of the labours of many years, and of much sorrow.

It is repeatedly remarked, that the prediction relating to the deliverance of God’s people was fulfilled to a single day. Of this we have a confirmation in the preceding chapter, and the 41st verse; “ And it came to pass, at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the *self-same day*, it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out of the land of Egypt.” Again, at the 51st verse; “ And it came to pass, the *self-same day*, that the LORD did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies.” And yet on comparing numbers in the prediction and the history of its accomplishment, we find a difference of

thirty years." The seventy interpreters were aware of this difficulty, and have obviated it by thus paraphrasing the passage in Exodus, "The sojourning of the children of Israel in the land of *Canaan*, and in the land of Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years." To justify which computation we need but to observe, that Moses in the four hundred and thirty years, includes all the time that Abraham had passed in Canaan, previous to the birth of Isaac. And a learned prelate of our own country, Archbishop Usher, in his valuable chronology, has proved this calculation to be just. For Abraham was exactly twenty-five years in Canaan before Isaac was born.* From the birth of Isaac to the exodus from Egypt was four hundred and five, which completes the four hundred and thirtieth year mentioned in this passage, and by Paul in the third of the Gallatians, 17th verse. Thus perfect are all the ways and works of GOD; thus absolute his power over all persons and all events! No skill, no ardor, no violent efforts on the part of Israel, could accelerate their enlargement. Nor could the combined strength of Egypt, of mankind, of created nature, retard it one single hour!

In order to preserve to all generations the memory of a period so singular and so important in their history, the ordinance of the passover was to be honoured with an annual celebration; and, as positive and arbi-

* Jacob was born to Isaac when he was sixty years old; and at the time he went down to Egypt, according to HIS OWN DECLARATION to Pharaoh, he was one hundred and thirty; which added to the twenty-five years of Abraham's pilgrimage, from his leaving Ur of the Chaldees to the birth of Isaac, make two hundred and fifteen.—He and his posterity continued in Egypt a like period of two hundred and fifteen years. So that it is plain Moses reckoned in the whole sum of four hundred and thirty years, all the pilgrimages of Abraham, and his posterity, from his first leaving his kindred and father's house in Mesopotamia down to their triumphant exit from Egypt, and their setting out on the conquest of Canaan, whose iniquity though not before was now full.

trary institutions derive all their value and use from a right understanding of their meaning, and the design of their author, express words are put into the mouths of parents and heads of families for the instruction of generations to come, in the nature and reason of this solemn service. “And thou shalt show thy son in that day, saying, *This is done*, because of that which the LORD did unto me, when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be for a sign unto thee, upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord’s law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt. And it shall be when thy son asketh thee, in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage. And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the Lord slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both the first-born of man, and the first-born of beasts: therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the first-born of my children I redeem.” Hence it appears that, besides this great annual sacrifice, a law was enacted at this time, though it was not to be enforced until they should be put in possession of the promised land, that in grateful remembrance of God’s passing over their first-born when he destroyed those of Egypt, the first-born of the human species, and also of the brute creation, through every age, should be dedicated and set apart as a sacred property. The great legislator was pleased afterwards, by a particular injunction, to appropriate to himself one whole tribe out of the twelve, in room of the first-born out of every tribe, to minister unto him, in holy things; and in this ordinance the church of God, at that early period, both exhibited and enjoyed an emblematical representation of the evangelical priesthood; not vested in and exclusively belonging to a particular description of men, but the common cha-

racter and dignity of all christians; a “ generation chosen of God, in Christ, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people—that they should show forth the praises of Him, who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.” And they are introduced before the throne, with this song of praise in their mouths, “ Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” Rev. i. 5, 6.

Is it not worth while to compare, seeing the Spirit of God has thought it meet to transmit to us the very numbers, the entire state of Israel, as it were, at the time of its descent into Egypt, and at its departure thence? The whole number which accompanied Jacob from Canaan, when driven thence by the famine, himself included, was sixty-six; which, added to the family of Joseph already in Egypt, consisting of himself, Asenath the daughter of the priest of On, adopted by marriage into the family of Abraham, and their two sons, the amount is seventy, when they left that country. In a period of little more than two hundred years, they are increased to the amazing sum of six hundred thousand men, of military age, without reckoning females, children of both sexes under twenty, and old men of sixty and upward: for that was the age of superannuation among this people. Taking therefore the calculation so low as four of all the other descriptions for one of the military age, that is, males from twenty to sixty, the whole number of the descendants of Abraham that left Egypt must have been at least three millions. So that, dividing the whole time of their sojourning there into periods of twenty years, it appears that their number was multiplied nearly three times every twenty years. Now if we consider, that the most rapid state of population in the ordinary course of nature, and in circumstances the most

favourable to it, is a *doubling* the number of inhabitants every twenty years; and that only in the earlier ages of a people or colony; what must we think of this amazing increase in circumstances the most unfavourable: in a people cooped up in a narrow district, and that district not their own, but the property of a nation much more powerful than themselves; a people among whom marriage was grievously discouraged by the want of liberty, by hard and oppressive labour, by subjection to the despotism of a foreign prince, by penal edicts which doomed all their male children to death, and by which, doubtless, multitudes perished, together with their natural increase? The multiplication of Israel in a proportion so great, in a progress so rapid, in a situation so unfriendly, will be in reality found a miracle, though less striking to a superficial observation, being gradually and imperceptibly performed, upon closer attention, a prodigy equal or superior to any that were wrought in immediately effecting their enfranchisement. And this leads us to the grateful acknowledgment of God's wise and gracious providence, in its ordinary operations and effects. What is daily preservation but creation—one omnific "LET THERE BE," daily, every instant repeated? What is the progress of vegetation, of life and reason, but the continual interposition of the great Source of all being, life and intelligence? What is dissolution and death, but the supporting, vivifying power of God withdrawn from the body which is just now inhabited?

This vast host was accompanied with what Moses calls a mixed multitude. This is supposed to have been made up of the produce of marriages between Israelites and Egyptians; of Egyptians, who, from the miracles which they had seen wrought in favour of Israel, had been determined to follow the fortunes of that people; and of neighbours who, in the ordinary intercourse of mankind, might be brought into contact

with them, and who through fear, interest or curiosity, might be induced to follow their camp.

Man, with his usual ignorance and haste, would have been for conducting this mighty army directly to Canaan. And no doubt the same almighty arm which had thus asserted them into liberty, could have led them straight forward to conquest. But in studying the history of the divine conduct as ordering and governing the affairs of men, we find it is composed partly of the interposition of Heaven, and partly of the exertions of men. It is not ALL miracle; that were to encourage eternal indolence and stupidity in rational beings, formed after the image of God, and to reduce men to mere passive clods of earth; nor is it all, on the other hand, the effect of human skill, industry and diligence; for that were to resign the government of the world to the frail and the foolish; that were to weaken the power of religion, which is the life, the joy, the guide, the support of the universe. But we discover divine interposition, to a certain degree, so as to inspire a reasonable confidence in and dependence upon God; and we discern the exertions of men crowned with success through the blessing of Heaven upon them, and this enforcing the necessity of bringing out and exercising the powers and faculties of our intellectual nature. Israel is delivered from Egypt at once; but is introduced into Canaan by degrees. The former act of sovereign power, unmixed with, independent upon human efforts; the latter, the less perceptible operation of Omnipotence, blending itself with, subduing, directing and promoting the designs and endeavours of reasonable beings, who had a great object in view, and a clear rule to walk by. Thus, in a case of universal importance, the justification and adoption of the sinner, are acts of free, sovereign grace, whereby sin is forgiven, and the right and privileges of sons conferred; whereas sanctification is the gradual work of the Spirit, supporting us by the way.

overcoming our enemies by little and little, and making us “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

A great multitude of people is always an object of serious attention, and of deep anxiety. Many mouths were to be fed, many humours to be studied, many talents to be employed. Some were to be gained by love, others to be governed by fear; the impetuosity of one was to be repressed, the timidity and diffidence of another to be countenanced and encouraged; care was to be exercised about those who were either unable or unwilling to exercise any about themselves. What a charge then was that of Moses and Aaron! bearing on their shoulders the burden of such an assembly; a vast multitude agitated with the ordinary passions of human nature; unarmed, unaccustomed to discipline, untractable; one moment elated with extravagant hopes, the next depressed with unseasonable fears. The wisdom of a Moses had been unequal to the task, unsupported by the Wisdom which sees all things at one view, and the Power which “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

There is a happy disposition in all the evils to which our nature and condition are subject, to find out and to apply their own remedy. Necessity always sets invention to work. Invention puts the machine in motion; and once in motion, every wheel keeps its place, exerts its power, performs its office. But here the mighty machine, prepared in all its parts according to the plan of infinite wisdom, put together and regulated by the hand of almighty power, and conducted by unchangeable truth and faithfulness, could not vary its motion, could not deviate from its design: and the passage of perhaps four millions of people, with their immense possessions of flocks and herds, and other property, from Egypt to Canaan, will appear one of those singular phenomena in history, which no principles of human conduct, no natural and ordinary concurrence

of events, are able to explain; and which must finally be resolved into a wisdom and power preternatural and divine. Accordingly we find Providence taking immediately the charge of them; but not in the usual way, not by forming a regular discipline, and raising up commanders and magistrates of unusual address and ability, but declaring by sensible tokens, which were seen, read and understood of all, “I am the Leader and *Commander* of my people.”

But before we proceed to the consideration of this wonderful symbol of the divine presence, we must attend our author, and take notice of a tender and touching circumstance in the departure from Egypt, namely, the removing of the bones of Joseph. That truly great man had been the saviour of his father's house when he was alive, and was now the hope of Israel after he was dead. In all their afflictions, his precious dust had been to them the pledge of deliverance; and now when that deliverance is come, they bear it with them to the land promised to their forefathers, for burial. Thus respectable and useful, in life and in death, are the wise and the good; thus anxious ought we to be to promote the best interests of mankind, not only while we are yet with them; but to leave something behind us that may benefit and instruct after we are seen and heard no more. Christians, we carry with us, as our hope in this wilderness, not the bones of a departed deliverer, but the memory of a risen Saviour. The sacred pledge of our final redemption is deposited, not in a coffin, but in this precious record—but in the history of facts, well known and firmly believed by you—but in many great and precious promises given unto you. “For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again; even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” The ashes of the patriarch Joseph could not rest in the tomb till Israel came to the possession of their promised inheritance; so the Spirit and providence of the great Redeemer are in perpetual

motion and exercise, till he shall have gathered into one all his redeemed unto himself; till the youngest of his sons, the meanest of his daughters, being glorified, shall take possession of their purchased inheritance, "the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world."

Thus then Israel takes his departure; thus joyfully, thus triumphantly, thus increased; and "not one sickly or feeble among them;" a wonder not inferior to any of the rest. But all "is of the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

The plain of Rameses was the first great rendezvous of the Lord's host. They had built, as part of their task-work, a city of that name at the command of Pharaoh. But it was also the name of a region of Egypt elsewhere called Goshen; the same which Joseph chose for the reception of his aged parents; because being situated nearest to Canaan, it diminished the length and fatigue of his journey, and being a grassy country, suited his family's employment, that of shepherds. The nearness to Canaan might accordingly be now again considered as a favourable circumstance to the return of Israel thitherward. If we may credit Philo, the two countries were not above three days journey distant the one from the other. And certain it is that the patriarchs, encumbered with a convoy laden with corn, easily performed a journey to a more distant part of Egypt, and back again, in the course of not many weeks at most. Moses might therefore have, without much difficulty, conducted the people of his charge to the place of their destination in a very small space of time. But was the distance of place the only difficulty which they had to encounter? How could men inured to slavery, men just escaped from the rod of a tyrannical oppressor, have the courage to meet the prowess and discipline of the warlike nations of Canaan; unprovided with arms for the field, and with military engines for the attack of fortified towns,

had they been bold enough to attempt to take possession by force. Some interpreters, indeed, render the word *harnessed*, in the eighteenth verse of the thirteenth chapter, *armed*. But the term in the original is so equivocal, and the learned attempts to determine its meaning are so unsuccessful, that we remain still in the dark about its true meaning. The presumption certainly is, that the Israelites were *not* armed. What had a nation of shepherds, living by sufferance in a foreign land, to do with arms? Would the policy of Egypt have permitted it? But Moses, the most accurate of historians, takes care to point out a circumstance which furnishes the first idea of putting arms into the hands of Israel. After the waves of the Red Sea had swallowed up the Egyptian army, their dead bodies with their arms were miraculously cast on shore, and provided Israel with armour from their spoils.

It is evident that God intended to form the courage and discipline of his people in the wilderness, before he tried these upon the nations whom they were destined to subdue. Nay, farther, it was evidently his design to settle their whole civil and religious polity, while they were yet in an erratic state, that when they came to Canaan there might be nothing to do but to take possession, and to execute the laws which they had already received. And alas, what shall we say? This swarm of people, numerous as the sand upon the sea-shore, with the exception of one or two, and Moses their leader among the rest, thus pompously and powerfully saved, were saved from Egypt, but to die in the wilderness. Men die, but the church lives: and the church is the care of God. “Thy way, O God, is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron,” Psalm lxxvii. 19, 20.

Instead then of marching straight northward, in the direction of Canaan, their course is bent eastward, to the great wilderness which bounds Egypt and Arabia Petræa: God himself leading the way, in a most wonderful display of his glorious presence and power, described in the words which I read at the opening of the Lecture. “And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them, by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people,” Exod. xiii. 20, 21, 22. In this God spake at once to the understanding and to the senses. Could any Israelite doubt that the Lord was there? He had but to open his eyes, whether it were by day or by night, and lo, a thick cloud obscuring the brightness of the one, or a flaming fire dispelling the shades of the other, proclaim the dread presence of JEHOVAH. Could any one call in question his kindness, when he saw darkness become a guide, and fire a protector? Durst any one presume to approach too nigh, when dimness impenetrable, and light inaccessible, alternately guarded his pavilion? Was it possible for any heart to fear, when the Most Mighty thus declared, in language more emphatical than can be conveyed by words—“Lo, I am for you! Who is he that can, that dare to be against you?”

The apperances of God are suited to the circumstances of his people. Cloud by night would have been to increase the horror, and to multiply the unwholesome damps of that season. Fire by day would have been adding fuel to a flame, already intensely hot, in a burning climate and parched soil. But tempered, adapted, distributed, according to wisdom not capable of error, the peculiar inconvenience of each season is relieved; and the ills of nature are remedied by the

dispensations of grace. The cloudy fiery pillar is a manifestation of Deity, suited to a wilderness state. In heaven, a God of love is light, without "any darkness at all." In hell, a God of implacable wrath is perpetual darkness, without one ray of light. On earth, a God of justice and mercy is darkness and light, in successive order and perfect harmony. In heaven, he is a flame that irradiates, cheers and quickens; in hell, a fire still consuming, never to be extinguished; on earth, fire in a cloud, mercy flowing in a spacious channel, judgment restrained. Men can only discover that of God which he is pleased to reveal to them. Whether he is pleased to turn his dark or bright side to us, we are stationed equally at a distance from him. To be sensible of our own darkness is to be partakers of his marvellous light. All that the brightest noon of human reason can discover is, that it is ignorance and folly, when placed in comparison with the wisdom of God.

Might not this wonderful pillar prefigure to the ancient church the person and office of the Redeemer of the world? Behold the divine essence wrapped up *in*, and closely united *to*, a veil of flesh and blood. Behold Deity raising our nature to incorruptibility and glory "in CHRIST, the first-fruits; and afterwards in all that are Christ's, at his coming." Do we not perceive in it, humanity bringing down the divine nature to our bearing and perception; "the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, declaring him to us." "The word made flesh" instructing the ignorant, cheering the disconsolate, directing the wanderer, refreshing the weary; guiding our waking, guarding our sleeping moments; "a partaker of our flesh and blood, that he may be a merciful High Priest: "declared the SON of GOD with power; men adoring and submitting; the powers of hell broken and discomfited: the triumph of heaven complete. "The Lord our God is a son and shield: the Lord

will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," Psalm lxxxiv.

11. "Fear not, O Israel, the Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going-out, and thy coming-in, from this time forth, and even forevermore," Psalm cxxi. 5—8.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE X.

And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.—EXODUS xiv. 21, 22.

IN the little benefits which men confer upon each other, it generally happens that some untoward circumstance insinuates itself, and occasions, to one of the parties at least, mortification, disappointment or disgust; for nothing human is perfect. A gracious action is frequently resented as an injury, from the ungracious manner in which it is performed. I am charmed with both the matter of that kindness shown me, and the affectionate disposition which prompted it; but alas, it arrived an hour too late! Another prevented my wishes; and I prized not the blessing, because I was not instructed in its value by feeling the want of it. This favour done me is very great, but it is not precisely the thing I looked for; or, it is so clogged with some unpleasant condition, that I would rather be without it: it affords me present relief, but will it not involve me in greater difficulties hereafter? Had I failed in my expectations from this quarter, I should easily have gained my end by applying to another friend. In a word, there is a perpetual *something*, in the friendly communications of men, which continually marrs the worth of what is given and re-

ceived. And no wonder, if we consider that favours are not always granted from affection, nor accepted with gratitude. But the bounties of Heaven possess every quality that can enhance their value, and endear their Author to a sensible heart. Infinitely valuable in themselves, they flow from love. The “good and perfect gifts, which come down from the Father of lights,” are given “liberally, and without upbraiding.” Exactly what we need, they come precisely at the moment when we want them most, or when they are most beneficial to us. Worthy of God to bestow; they cannot be unworthy of us to receive. Were he to withhold his gracious aid, in vain should we look for relief from any other quarter. Productive of present satisfaction and joy, his benefits involve us in no future distress, shame or remorse. Serviceable to the body, they are at the same time improving to the mind. Important and interesting for time, they have an influence upon eternity.

The gracious interpositions of Jehovah in behalf of his chosen people, have this peculiar recommendation to our attention, as to that people’s grateful observation and acknowledgment—that they were not in the usual course of things; they were the fruits of the constant and unremitting care of a special providence; they were the suspension or alteration of the established laws of nature; they were the operation of a mighty hand, and an out-stretched arm, sensibly controlling the winds, the waves and the clouds; and subduing the most ungovernable elements to its purpose. Other parents are endued with transitory affections and attachments, suited to the transitory nature of the trust committed to them. The hen tends her unfledged brood with the vigilance of a dragon and the boldness of a lion. But material tenderness and anxiety diminish and expire with the occasion of them, namely, the weakness and inexperience of her young ones. When the son is become a man, paternal care relaxes, and paternal authority is at an end. But, as the authority of our

heavenly Father never ceases, so his bowels of compassion are never restrained; his vigilance is never lulled to rest, his care never suspended; because his offspring is, to the last, impotent, improvident, imperfect.

In vain had Israel, by a series of miracles unparalleled in the annals of mankind, been rescued from Egyptian oppression, had not the same almighty arm which delivered them at first, continued to protect and support them. The strength of Egypt, broken as it was, had been sufficient to force them back. The wilderness itself had been fatal to them, without a foe. How easily are the greatest deliverances forgotten; how soon are the most awful appearances familiarized to the mind! The very first threatening of danger effaces from the memory of these Israelites all impression of the powerful wonders which had just passed before them, eclipses the glory of that cloud which, at that very instant, presented itself to their eyes, and overshadowed their heads. But let not self-flattery impose upon us, as if we were more faithful and obedient than they were. It is the mere deception of vanity and self-love to suppose, that “if one were to arise from the dead, we would be persuaded;” that if we saw a miracle wrought, we would believe; that if we heard Christ teach in our streets, we would forsake all and follow him.” The man, whom the usual appearances of nature do not move, would soon become insensible to more uncommon phenomena. For, extraordinary things frequently repeated are no longer so, and consequently soon loose their force. If the daily miracles of God’s mercy and loving-kindness fail to convince men, what reason is there to hope, that mere exertions of power would produce a happier effect? If Christ, speaking by his word and ministering servants, be treated with neglect, is it likely that his *person* would be held in veneration? If men “hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be per-

suaded though one rose from the dead," Luke xvi. 31. It is not notorious, that Christ's personal ministrations were slighted, his miracles vilified, his character traduced?

Whose conduct is the more absurd and criminal, that of Pharaoh, in pursuing after and attempting to bring back a people, who had been a snare and a curse to himself and his kingdom; or that of Israel, in trembling at the approach of an enemy, whom God had so often subdued under them? Frail nature looks only to the creature; to surrounding mountains, opposing floods, persecuting foes: hence terror, confusion and astonishment. But faith eyes the pillar, the residence of divine majesty, and then mountains sink, seas divide, the chariot and horseman are overthrown. Every passion, when it becomes predominant, renders us silly and unreasonable; and none more so than fear. In danger and distress it is natural, but it is foolish, to impute to another the evils which we fear or feel. It seems to be an alleviation of our own misery, if we can contrive to shift the blame of it upon the shoulders of our neighbour. Hence Moses is loaded with the imputation of a deliberate design of involving his nation in this dire dilemma, between Pharaoh and the Red Sea, and of selling them to the foe. A high and responsible situation is far from being an enviable one. If things go well, the conductor of the undertaking receives but a divided, a mutilated praise. If an enterprise fail, the whole blame of the miscarriage is imputed to him. The astonished multitude dare not directly attack God himself. No: the cloudy pillar hangs over their heads, ready to burst, in thunder and fire, on the man who presumed to aim his shafts so high. But their impiety seeks the pitiful shelter of a subterfuge; they murmur against Moses, because they imagine they can do it with impunity: and think to escape the resentment of the master, though they are wounding him through the sides of his servant. Mark yet again the folly and

unreasonableness of fear. "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." What were they afraid of now? A grave in the wilderness. What do they put in comparison with, and prefer to it? A grave in Egypt. It was a grave at the worst. Their wretched lives had got at least a short reprieve. If they died now, they died at once; and died like men, defending their lives, liberty, and families: not pouring out life, drop by drop, under the whip of a taskmaster. But slavery has broken their spirit. They are reduced to the lowest pitch of human wretchedness; for this, surely, is the last stage of it. "It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness."

To this abject view of degeneracy and dejection, two objects are placed in contrast—the calmness and intrepidity of Moses, and the majesty and power of God. In contemplating the former of these, as one great object of these Lectures is to unfold human character, and to hold up to imitation and applause praise-worthy conduct, let me endeavour to fix your attention upon the more obvious features of the great man, who is here drawing his own portrait.

All the great interests of Moses were embarked, with those of the commonwealth of Israel. His lot was cast into the common lap. He had made a sacrifice unspeakably greater than any individual of the congregation had done. His prospects, for either himself or his family, were neither brighter nor more flattering than those of the obscurest Hebrew among them. If there were danger from the pursuing host of Pharaoh, his share, most assuredly, was not less

than that of any other man. He had rendered himself peculiarly obnoxious to that stern, unrelenting tyrant, and must have been among the first victims of his resentment. But the pressing danger of Moses did not arise from Pharaoh, and the Egyptians, but from an intimidated, distracted multitude, who were ready to wreak their vengeance on whoever might first meet their resentment, or could be most plausibly charged as the author of their misfortunes. The composure of Moses, in such circumstances, is therefore justly to be considered as an instance of uncommon heroism and magnanimity. But why do we talk of heroism? the man who fears God knows no other fear. In the confidence of faith, though he knew not yet which way God was to work deliverance for Israel, he thus attempts to diffuse the hope, which he felt irradiating his own soul: "Fear ye not; stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

Let me entreat you to observe, that the agent in this great transaction is also the historian of it; and that the resolution and spirit of the one is to be equalled only by the modesty and simplicity of the other. In the hands of one of the eloquent orators of Greece or Rome, what a figure would this passage of the life of the Jewish legislator have made, could we suppose them entering into the situation of a stranger, with the warmth which they feel in delineating the characters and conduct of their own heroes, and embellishing the dignity of modest merit with the glowing ornaments of rhetoric? But scripture says much, by saying little. And the meek reserve, the unaffected conciseness of the sacred historian, infinitely exceed the diffusive and laboured panegyrics of profane poetry or history. We have already, perhaps, deviated too far from that beautiful simplicity; and diminished, instead of magni-

fying our object, by multiplying words. We hasten, therefore, with our author, to contemplate an object of infinitely higher consideration than himself; to which he constantly brings his own, and instructs us to bring our tribute of praise.

Behold the obstructions, which nature and art and accident have assembled to distress, to discourage, and to destroy the church of God! An impassable ridge of mountains upon the right hand and upon the left; the roaring sea in front; a powerful, exasperated, revengeful enemy following close behind; internal weakness, irresolution and dissension: the voice of sedition loud; Moses on his face before God. In such a situation as this, Omnipotence alone can save. No voice but that of a God is worthy of being heard. Be silent then, O heavens, and listen O earth, it is God, who speaks. “And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward!” What sublimity, simplicity, and force was here! “Go forward!” What, into the raging billows? Great God, thy commands declare thy name and thy nature! What power except thine own, but must have been exposed and disgraced, by assuming such a high tone of authority! But what obstacle can oppose Him, who said, “Let there be light, and there was light?” “who spake, and it was done; who gave commandment, and it stood fast?”

My heart is agitated with a mixture of fear and joy as I proceed. “The Lord God has given the word—Let the people go forward.” When lo, the conducting pillar instantly changes its position, and solemnly retreats to the rear of the Israelitish host. The word given clears all the way before them, and “the glory of the Lord becomes their reward.” Now, behold the double effect of this symbol of the divine presence! To Israel, the cloud is all light and favour; to the Egyptians, all darkness and dismay. To those, night shineth as the day—to these, there is obscurity at noon.

day! “And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed, and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them. And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness *to them*, but it gave light by night *to these*: so that the one came not near the other all the night.” Awful distinction! Where shall we find the solution of the difficulty? where, but in this, “He *will have mercy* on whom he will have mercy; and whom he will he hardeneth,” Rom. ix. 18.

To prepare us for the history of the miracle which follows, give your attention, for a few moments, to what every man and woman among you may have observed a thousand and a thousand times. Go to the bank of the river, go to the shore of the sea, and twice in every twenty-four hours, as certainly as light proceeds from the sun, what is now dry land will be covered with water, and what is now overflowed shall infallibly become dry ground. Farther, when a little wandering star, called the moon, is in this direction, or in that, the whole waters of the globe, in the ocean, in the seas, in the rivers, are elevated or depressed to such a certain degree. Let that planet be in an eastern or a western direction, the tide is precisely at the same pitch of height or depth. After we have made this remark, which is obvious to the notice and level to the understanding of a child; the question will naturally occur, What, does this never fail? May we depend and act upon the certainty of such a regular succession and change taking place? Do the waters of the earth thus certainly feel, or seem to feel, the various appearances of the moon? Then it cannot be without the design and interposition of an intelligent and powerful cause, which never misses its aim, is never off its guard, is never thwarted or defeated by unforeseen obstacles. Then, that invisible, unknown, incomprehensible power, may exercise a discretionary influence

over the stream of a particular river, over the billows of a particular sea. He may, with or without apparent second causes, make the current overflow its banks, or to become dry.

Or, to make another appeal to common observation and experience, when the sun is in such a certain position with respect to our earth, and the wind blows in such a direction, the water in that lake will be liquid and transparent, and the smallest, lightest pebble will sink to the bottom. But let the elevation of the sun be changed to an angle somewhat more acute, and let the wind shift into the opposite quarter, then, beyond all doubt, the self-same water shall become solid as the rock, lose its transparency, and become capable of sustaining any weight that can be put upon it. How easy had it been for Him, who produces regularly these changes in the course of every changing year, to have given the globe such a position, as would have rendered the hoary deep one vast mountain of ice, all the year round, or have prevented a single drop of water from ever being congealed. And “wherefore should it be thought a thing incredible,” that such an one, willing to make his power known, and his grace felt, should at his own time, and in his own way, do that in a particular instance, which he could have done perpetually and universally. Grant me the usual appearances and operations of nature, and I am prepared for all the uncommon, miraculous phenomena, with which the God of nature may see meet to present me. We come, accordingly, to the history of dividing the Red Sea, perfectly convinced that he who made it at first, can make of it whatever he pleases; and thoroughly satisfied that the occasion of such a notable miracle, as it is related by Moses, was entirely worthy of it.

If it be a just rule in criticism, that a Deity is never to be introduced but when his interposition is necessary, and on occasions becoming his dignity, the Mosaic account of this wonderful event, stands fully justified in

point of taste as well as authenticity. The powerful rod is once more stretched out. The east wind blows: the sea retires; and a safe and easy passage is opened for Israel through the channel of the deep. "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

"Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." The word which commands the progress also prepares the way. As in latter times, by the effectual working of the same almighty power, the grace which cured the father's unbelief, at the self-same instant likewise cast the devil out of the son. It is the sensible language of the common proverb, "The *king* said, Sail; but the *wind* said, No." The command of the King of kings alone procures prompt obedience from every creature; for all are his subjects in fact, as well as of right. Thrones, principalities and powers are subject unto him; and "a sparrow falleth not to the ground without our heavenly Father." When we behold our blessed Saviour, in the New Testament, saying to the stormy wind and foaming billows, "Peace, be still," and a great calm instantly ensuing; and compare it with the work of the great Jehovah under review, we are led directly to the conclusion of the Roman centurion who observed the wonders attending the crucifixion, "Truly this was the Son of God."

In the history of our country there is a passage, which the event we are considering suggests to our thoughts, and which does honour to the piety, modesty and good sense of the prince whom it concerns. Canute, one of the earthly kings of the southern division of England, justly disgusted at the gross and impious adulation of some of his courtiers, who ascribed to him the attributes which belong only to God, and called him "lord of the earth and of the sea," that he might check their folly by something more than a simple reproof, commanded his chair of state to be placed

on the beach near Southampton, during the flowing of the tide. Arrayed in his royal robes, and attended by all the nobility and great men of his court, he sat down with his face towards the sea, and thus addressed it; "I charge thee upon thy allegiance, O sea, to advance no farther. Here I, thy lord, have thought proper to fix my station. Know thy distance; respect my authority, nor dare to touch the feet of thy sovereign, under pain of his highest displeasure." The swelling billows, regardless of his command and threatenings, continued to rush in, advanced impetuously to the steps of his throne, and speedily constrained the monarch and his train to retire. Upon which, turning round to his flatterers, he observed, "that he only deserved to be acknowledged as Lord of the land and the sea, whose will the winds and the waves obeyed."

The breadth of the passage opened through the Red Sea must have been very considerable indeed, to have afforded to such a multitude as four millions of people, for less there could not be, space to get over in a single night's time. To determine this we must have recourse to calculation. But your time being far spent, this, together with an attempt to solve some of the difficulties of the dispensation, and to remove some of the objections which infidelity has raised to the credibility or miraculousness of the history, must make a constituent part of another Lecture.

In practically applying this subject, we may consider the Red Sea, by which the armies of Israel were stopt short, as an emblematical representation of that great fight of affliction, that sea of trouble, through which every believer must pass in his way to the heavenly Canaan. Through the furnaces of Egypt, through the parts of the Red Sea, through the swellings of Jordan, God's ancient people at length got possession of the promised land. And it is "through manifold tribulations that we must enter into the king-

dom of God. It is of importance not only that we be going forwards, but that we be making progress; that growth in grace should keep pace with the uninterrupted flux of human life. The course which Providence leads us, though neither the shortest nor the most desirable, will be found upon the whole the safest, the surest and the best. The possession of Canaan is not always the next step to our escape from Egypt. Justification by the grace of God puts us beyond the reach of our enemies, and adoption makes good our title to "the inheritance of the saints in light;" but it is sanctification that makes us meet for the enjoyment of the purchased possession. The Red Sea seemed to put an end to Israel's progress, but actually shortened the distance. So affliction, while it appears intended to overwhelm, is accelerating the believer's speed to his Father's house above. "All these things are against me," saith frail, faltering, erring man, in his haste. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God," saith the better informed, the experience-taught christian, on reviewing the mysterious ways of Providence; and on having attained "the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul." If we look to the creature only, all is dark and comfortless: nothing but cloud. When through the creature we look to an invisible God, all is peace and joy. We cannot remove mountains, nor turn floods into dry ground. It is not meet we should be trusted with such power. Obedience is our proper province; submission to the will of God our truest wisdom; and when we follow the direction of Providence, our way cannot but be prosperous. "Lord, we will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Human conduct is a woful inversion of this rule. We torment ourselves about the event over which we have no power, and trifle with the commandment with which alone we have to do. We neglect our duty, and then foolishly and impiously complain that we are

unkindly dealt by, when Providence promotes not, or crosses our inclinations. Let us show cheerful and unreserved compliance; and be the issue what it may, whether our wishes be opposed or succeed, we shall at least have the consolation of reflecting, that the miscarriage is not chargeable to our own perverseness or folly. It is a dreadful, it is a two-edged evil, at once to lose our aim, and incur the just displeasure of God by disobedience. “Thy will,” O Father, “be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” Amen.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE XI.

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my Father's God, and I will exalt him.
EXODUS xv. 1, 2.

TO no one man has the world been so much indebted for rational pleasure and useful knowledge, as to the inspired author of these sacred books. Moses, as he is the most ancient, so he is by far the best writer that ever existed. Never in one and the same character were united talents so various, so rare, and so valuable. He may without hesitation be pronounced, the most eloquent of historians, the sublimest of poets, the profoundest of sages, the most sagacious of politicians, the most acute of legislators, the most intrepid of heroes, the clearest sighted of prophets, the most amiable of men. The qualities of his heart seem to strive for the mastery with those of the understanding: so that it is difficult to determine whether, as the reputed son of Pharaoh's daughter, as a voluntary exile from the splendor of a court, as the sympathizing friend of his afflicted brethren, as the bold protector of virgin innocence, as the contented shepherd of Jethro's flock, as the magnanimous assertor of Israelitish liberty, or finally, as king in Jeshurun, ruling the

thousands of Israel with meekness and wisdom—he most challenges our admiration and praise. Had the world never been favoured with his works, or were it now to be deprived of that precious treasure, the loss were inconceivably great. Who does not shudder at the thought? What a fearful gap in the history of mankind! What a blow to take, what a blank in science, what an impoverishing of the public stock of harmless pleasure, what an injury to the dearest, the best, the everlasting interests of mankind!

The venerable man, who has for so many evenings past condescended to delight and instruct us by the relation of events the most singular, interesting and important, assumes this night a new character; and in strains the sweetest and boldest that bard ever sung; in verses the loftiest that the imagination of poet ever dictated, rouses, warms, transports the mind. We forget the distance of three thousand years. We feel ourselves magically conveyed to the banks of the Red Sea. We join in the acclamations of the redeemed of the Lord, as this song of Moses swells upon our ear.—“Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots, and with his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone,” Verses 1, 19—5. How wonderfully suited to each other, the event and the celebration of it!

In fulfilling the promise made in the conclusion of the last Lecture, and executing the business of the present, three objects are proposed. First, to attempt a vindication of the history of the passage of the Red Sea, from some objections which have been made to the credibility or miraculousness of it. Secondly, to

make a few criticisms on the sacred hymn which was composed on the occasion, and now, in part, read in your hearing; in the view of pointing out a few of its more striking beauties. And, thirdly, to make a few remarks on sacred poesy in general, tending to evince its superiour excellency; and to point out the delicacy and difficulty of attempting to amplify or imitate what the inspired poets have written, as helps to devotion. In the first I shall, without ceremony or apology, borrow the assistance of the pious and learned author of *Dissertations, historical, critical, theological and moral, on the most memorable events of the OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT history*—James Saurin, late minister of the French church at the Hague.* In the second, I shall submit to be instructed by an ingenious, pious and eloquent professor of rhetoric in the university of Paris, who has made choice of this passage, expressly for the purpose of exemplifying the majesty, beauty and simplicity of the scripture style.† And in the third, I shall do little more than transcribe from an elegant, penetrating and instructive moralist of our own age and country.‡ To return:

If we collect the several circumstances of this wonderful piece of history, it will readily be acknowledged, that there is here presented to the mind one of the greatest, or rather a series of the greatest miracles, which the hand of Omnipotence ever wrought in behalf of any nation. It is not therefore to be wondered at if the enemies of revelation have endeavoured to sully their lustre, and impeach their credibility.

Three methods have been employed for this purpose—To ascribe these events to natural causes—To put them on a footing with others related in profane history, and to represent them as contradictory and inconsistent. Three bulwarks of infidelity; as many grounds of triumph for truth.

* Tom. i. Disc. xlix.
Liv. Sacr.

† Rollin Bel. Let. Tom. ii. Eloq. de
‡ Johnson's Life of the poet Waller.

First, these events, which we ascribe entirely to the almighty power of God, have been accounted for from the common and natural operation of cause and effect. Eusebius has preserved and transmitted to us a fragment from an ancient author, Artapanes,* to this purpose: "Those of Memphis, one of the chief cities of ancient Egypt, allege, that Moses perfectly understood the country; that he had accurately observed the ebbing and flowing of the sea, and took advantage of the retreat of the tide to lead the people over. But they of Heliopolis relate the matter differently, saying, that while the king was pursuing the Israelites, Moses, by the command of Heaven, struck the waters with a rod, upon which they immediately separated, and left a spacious and safe passage for that great multitude; and that the Egyptians attempting to follow them the same way, were dazzled and confounded by preternatural fires, lost their way, and by the reflux of the sea, were overtaken in the midst of the channel, and thus all perished either by water or by fire."

Now, granting to this quotation all the force that unbelief can give it, this evidently appears upon the face of it, that Moses has vouchers of his divine legation, even in Egypt, even among the idolators themselves. If the Memphites accuse our historian of endeavouring to make a natural pass for a miraculous event, the Heliopolitans acknowledge that it was preternatural, and ascribe it to an immediate interposition of Heaven. And this concession is important, when we consider that it comes from the mouth of an enemy.

Again, the supposition of the Memphites must be rejected by all those who pay any regard to the authority of Moses, and of the other sacred writers. He himself indeed admits, that the effect was forwarded by the assistance of a strong east wind. And whatever he ascribes to that, may seem so far to derogate from the greatness of the miracle. But it is no less

* Euseb. Prepar. Lib. ix. Cap. xxvii.

true, that he throws out nothing like an insinuation that the passage of the vast host of Israel was produced by the intervention of second causes. And all the inspired authors, who, after him, have mentioned it or alluded to it, acknowledge *only* a supernatural agency. Thus Joshua, who was an eye-witness and a party deeply concerned in the event. "For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over: that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever," Josh. iv. 23, 24. Thus, Psalm lxvi. 6. "He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot; there did we rejoice in him." And lxxviii. 13. "He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through, and he made the waters to stand as an heap." And cvi. 9. "He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths as through the wilderness." And Heb. xi. 29. "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned." So that Moses, Joshua, David, and Paul, have but one and the same opinion on this subject.

But farther, the essence of a miracle does not always consist in counteracting or suspending the laws of nature. One of the most contemptible of the adversaries of religion has weakly imagined,* that by a single objection he was able to invalidate one of the bulwarks, and shake one of the pillars of revelation. "These miraculous effects," says he, "are referred, by the confession of scripture historians themselves, to the operation of second causes. It was by warming the body of a child, that Elijah brought him to life again. It was by applying clay, or dust mingled with

* Spinoza Tract. Theol. Polit. Cap. vi.

spittle, to the eyes of a blind man, that Jesus Christ restored him to sight. It was by a wind, that Moses brought locusts upon Egypt, and obtained a passage through the Red Sea." To this it is replied—That the most common and natural things become miracles, when they present themselves precisely at the time and in the manner prescribed by Him who commands their appearance, for the confirmation and establishment of a certain doctrine. What so natural and common, for example, as to see the sun shining one moment in full and unobstructed glory, and the next darkened and concealed by clouds? But, if a person publishing a new doctrine as divine, should undertake to prove his mission by changing the appearance of the bright orb of day, at his pleasure, and by showing him either in unclouded majesty, or eclipsed and shorn of his beams, according as he gave the word; and should we behold this very ordinary natural phenomenon actually and uniformly obeying the mandate, would not such an event, however natural in itself, become preternatural and miraculous from its circumstances? Thus, there might be occasion for the influence of the wind, to favour and facilitate the passage of Israel. But how was it possible for their leader, by mere human sagacity, to discover that a wind from such a quarter, springing up exactly at such an hour, should harden the bottom of the deep?

But, supposing the philosophy of Moses sufficiently accurate to assure him, that at such a time he might in safety march over his cumbersome retinue; could it inform him also that Pharaoh and his captains would certainly be mad enough to follow them through that dangerous route? Could it assure him that the rashness of the tyrant, and the law which regulated the flowing of the sea, would exactly keep time, so as effectually to produce the destruction of his whole army? The flux and reflux of the tide were known to Moses; but, was it entirely unknown to the Egyptians? What,

in so great an army, led by the sovereign in person, in a land renowned for natural knowledge, was there no man astronomer enough to know, that the difference of a few hours is every thing in a case of this sort; that to be in such a spot, at such a time, was inevitable destruction? Incredible! impossible!

Finally, it is altogether inconceivable that the space of three or four hours, the utmost that an ebb merely natural could have afforded them, was sufficient for the transition of such an astonishing multitude as that which Moses conducted. The learned Calmet has so fully demonstrated this point,* as to enforce the conclusion, that no degree of human knowledge could have disclosed to Moses a foresight of the events which proved so propitious to him. Not therefore to the superiority of genius, but to a power divine, the praise is to be ascribed. And to the same principle we must recur in order to explain the mighty difference which Providence puts between the Israelites and the Egyptians, in the midst of the Red Sea.

Attempts have been made to debase the dignity of this great event, by reducing it to the level of similar appearances recorded by profane historians. That degenerate son of Israel, Josephus, first started this objection. These are his words; "This," speaking of the passage of the Red Sea, "I have related with all the circumstances, as I find them in our sacred authors. Nobody ought to think it an incredible thing, that a people which lived in the innocence and simplicity of the first ages, might have found a way through the sea to save themselves. Whether it was that the sea itself opened it for them, or whether it was done by the will of God: since the same thing happened long after to the Macedonians, when they passed through the sea of Pamphylia, under the conduct of Alexander, when God thought fit to make use of that people for the de-

* Desert. sur le passage de la Mer Rouge.

struction of the Persian empire, as it is affirmed by all the historians who have written the life of that prince. However, I leave all men to judge of this matter as they think fit." Thus far Josephus.*

The other instances which some presume to be put in competition with this, are the approach of Scipio with his army to the attack of New Carthage, by means of an extraordinary ebb at the change of the moon, recorded by Livy:† a similar ebb of the river Euphrates, related by Plutarch, in his life of Lucullus; and, a flood altogether as singular, upon the coast of Holland, in the year 1672; which kept up for twelve whole hours, and was apparently the means of preserving that republic from the consequences of a joint attack of the fleets of England and France. It is handed down to us in the life of the famous admiral De Ruyter, who had the command of the Dutch squadron at that time. Neither your time nor patience admitting of an inquiry into the truth of these several facts, we satisfy ourselves with observing, that admitting them to be true, not one of them is any way worthy to be compared with the Mosaic account of the passage across the Red Sea. The pointed and particular prediction of Moses; the rod employed, and the instantaneousness of the effect; the facility and speed of the passage; the rashness of the Egyptians; their tragical end; every thing in short concurs to render this an unparalleled event. And nothing but an immoderate desire of depreciating the miracles of the sacred history, could have attempted to diminish this celebrated transit into a comparison with any of the other events which are alluded to.

The third objection is, to the truth of the history; pretended to be taken from the history itself. The time allotted by Moses, by his own account, for the congregation, consisting of so many myriads, to pass

* Antiq. Jud. Lib. ii. Cap. vii.

† Lib. xvi. Cap. xlv.

over, is considered by the objectors as much too short for the purpose. But in order to support it, they are obliged to go into uncertain, fanciful and unsupported conjectures, about the breadth of the Red Sea at the place where the passage was opened. They make the breadth of that passage just what it suits their own arbitrary conjecture and calculation. They must needs constrain a great multitude, in very peculiar circumstances, unaccustomed to discipline, stimulated by fear, and borne on the wings of hope, to move with the leisure and deliberation of a regular army. They will not deign to acknowledge the power and grace of the Most High in every part of the transaction. They overlook the description given of that people, Psalm cv. 37. as a people full of strength and vigour, and "not one sickly among them." They forget what God himself soon after says of them, "You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself." We conclude, that as the case taken altogether was singular, unprecedented, and followed by nothing like it; so the particular circumstances of it are likewise singular and unexampled, and will, with every candid person, bear out Moses, the sacred historian, against the charge of being inconsistent with himself.

We proceed to the second object which we proposed, namely, to point out a few of the more striking beauties of the sacred song, which was composed and sung in grateful acknowledgment of that great deliverance which we have been contemplating. What will undoubtedly give it a high value in the estimation of many is, that it is the most ancient morsel of poetry which the world is in possession of: being three thousand three hundred and thirty-seven years old, that is, six hundred and forty-seven years before Homer, the most ancient and the best of heathen bards, lived or sung. But its antiquity is its slightest excellency. The general turn of it is great, the thoughts nobly

simple, the style sublime, the expression strong, the pathos sweet, the figures natural and bold. It abounds throughout with images which at once strike, warm, astonish and delight. The occasion of it you well know. The poet's view is to indulge himself in transports of joy, admiration and gratitude, and to inspire the people with the same sentiments. Accordingly he thus impetuously breaks out,

Verse 1. "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." Here the tremendous majesty of God the deliverer, and the lively gratitude of the people saved, the leading object of the piece, are placed instantly and powerfully in sight; and they are never dropt for one moment, to the end. *I*, in the singular number, is much more energetic and affecting than *we* in the plural would have been. The triumph of Israel over the Egyptians did not resemble the usual triumphs of nation over nation; where the individual is overlooked and lost in the general. No; every thing here is peculiar and personal. Every Israelite for himself reflects with joy on his own chains now for ever broken in pieces. He seems to exult over his own tyrant-master now subdued under him, and hails his personal liberty now effectually secured. For it is natural to the heart of man, in extreme danger, to refer every thing to himself, and to consider himself as all in all. "The *horse* and his rider hath he thrown into the sea:" for the same reason the *horse* is much more forcible than *horses* would have been; it marks strongly the suddenness, the universality, the completeness of the destruction. The Egyptian cavalry, numerous, formidable, covering the face of the ground, is represented in a moment, by a single effort, at one blow, overthrown, overwhelmed, as if they had been but *one* horse and *one* rider.

Verse 2. "JEHOVAH is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will

prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him." It is lawful to say, that the poet employs the most exquisite art, in representing this great deliverance, in every part and every view of it, as the work of JEHOVAH: the great "I AM THAT I AM:" that name of GOD, by which he chose to be known to Israel through the whole of those memorable transactions. My *strength*, that is, the source or cause of my strength: and it points out the great God as the courage and force of Israel, without the necessity of their exerting any of their own. "*My song*," that is, the subject of it. No instrument divides the praise with him. No power, no wisdom is employed but his own. He planned, arranged, executed every thing by himself. "HE is become my *salvation*." The fine writers of Greece or Rome would probably have said, "He hath saved me." But Moses says much more; The Lord hath undertaken himself to work deliverance for me: he hath made my salvation his own, his personal concern, and is become to me every thing I can want.

"*He is MY GOD*." Every word is emphatical. "*He*," in opposition to the gods of Egypt, which cannot hear, nor see, nor save. "*My God*:" all attentive to *my* interest and safety, as if he had no creature but *me* to take care for: and therefore *my God*: for I acknowledge not, I never will acknowledge, any other. "*My father's God*." This repetition is most beautifully tender and pathetic. He whose greatness I adore, is not a strange God, unknown till now; a protector for a moment. No, he is the ancient patron of my family, his goodness is from generation to generation. I have a thousand *domestic* proofs of his constant, undiminished affection; and he is now making good to me only that which he solemnly promised to my *forefathers*. And how has he effected this?

"The LORD is a man of war."

An ordinary writer would probably have represented

the Almighty here as the God of armies; and as such, discomfiting the host of Pharaoh. But Moses does more; he brings him forth as a champion, a soldier; puts the sword into his hand, and exhibits him fighting his battles, the battles of Israel.

The fourth and fifth verses contain a very fine display and amplification of the simple idea suggested in the first, “the *horse* and his *rider*.”

“Pharaoh’s chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains are also drowned in the Red Sea, the depths have covered them, they sank into the bottom as a stone.” Image rises and swells above image. Pharaoh’s *chariots*, his *hosts*, his *chosen captains*—*cast* into the sea, *drowned* in the Red Sea—*covered* with the depths, *sunk* to the bottom, at once, as a *stone*. Notwithstanding their pride and insolence, they can make no more resistance to the power of Jehovah, than a stone launched from the arm of a strong man into the flood.

Every writer but a Moses must have stopped short here; or flattered his subject, by repeating or extending the same ideas. But the seraphic poet, upborne by an imagination which overleaps the boundaries of the world, and an enthusiasm which cannot rest in any creature, springs up to the Creator himself, in these rapturous strains:

“Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in thy power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. In the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee.”

When the heart is full of an object, it turns it round, as it were, on every side, returns to it again and again; never tires in contemplating it, till admiration is lost in astonishment. Moses after this effusion of joy and praise returns again to the matter of fact: but not in the language of mere description, as in the 4th verse; but in a continuation of his bold, animated address to God himself; which gives it a life and fervour superior

to any thing human. As if the strength of one element had not been sufficient to destroy God's enemies, every element lends its aid. The deep opens its mouth, the fire consumes, the wind rages; all nature is up in arms, to avenge the quarrel of an incensed God. The poet ennobles the wind, by making God the principle of it; and animates the fire, by making it susceptible of fear. In the same style of address to God, he throws himself as it were into the person and character of the enemy, previous to their defeat, and pours forth their sentiments of threatening and slaughter; the more strongly to mark their disappointment, by contrasting the folly and impotence of man, with the power and justice of God. "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." You see here vengeance hastening to its object, regardless of opposition. The words, unconnected with a conjunction, seem to hurry on like the passion that prompts to them. And in what does it issue? "Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them." And the picture is finished with this happy stroke, "They sank as lead in the mighty waters."

But I feel I have undertaken a task far beyond my ability, and the limits of your time. And therefore break off with another borrowed remark, namely, that whatever grandeur and magnificence we may discover in this song, as it stands in such a place and connexion, its beauty and force must greatly rise upon us, were we permitted to penetrate through the mysterious sense concealed behind the veil of this great event. For it is certain, that this deliverance from Egypt covers and represents salvation of a superior and more extensive nature. The apostle of the Gentiles teaches us to consider it as a type of that freedom which the christian obtains by the waters of baptism, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, from the yoke of the prince of this

world. And the prophet, in the book of Revelation, makes it to shadow forth the final and great deliverance of the redeemed, by introducing the assembly of those who have overcome the beast, holding the harps of God in their hands, and singing “the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints! Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest,” Rev. xv. 3, 4. Now, as the scriptures declare that the wonders of this second deliverance shall infinitely surpass the first, and shall entirely obliterate the remembrance of it; we may easily believe that the beauties of the *spiritual* sense of this divine poem may totally eclipse those of the *historical*.

Having endeavoured imperfectly to unfold some of the excellencies of this ancient sacred composition, I should proceed, as I proposed, to point out the delicacy of attempting, and the difficulty of succeeding, in imitating or extending devotional poetry; but your time and patience, perhaps, will be better employed in hearing me read to you a short passage, containing the sentiments of an excellent modern critic* on the subject; with which I shall conclude this exercise.

“It has been the frequent lamentation of good men, that verse has been too little applied to the purposes of worship; and many attempts have been made to animate devotion by pious poetry. That they have very seldom attained their end is sufficiently known; and it may not be improper to inquire why they have miscarried.

“Let no pious ear be offended, if I advance, in opposition to many authorities, that poetical devotion

* Dr. Samuel Johnson.

cannot often please. The doctrines of religion may, indeed, be defended in a didactic poem; and he who has the happy power of arguing in verse, will not loose it because his subject is sacred. A poet may describe the beauty and grandeur of nature, the flowers of spring, and the harvests of autumn, the vicissitudes of the tide, and the revolutions of the sky, and praise the Maker for his works, in lines which no reader shall lay aside. The subject of the disputation is not piety, but the motives to piety; that of the description is not God, but the works of God.

“Contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical. Man admitted to implore the mercy of his Creator, and plead the merits of his Redeemer, is already in a higher state than poetry can confer.

“The essence of poetry is invention; such invention as, by producing something unexpected, surprises and delights. The topics of devotion are few, and being few are universally known; but few as they are, they can be made no more; they can receive no grace from novelty of sentiment, and very little from novelty of expression.

“Poetry pleases by exhibiting an idea more grateful to the mind than things themselves afford. This effect proceeds from the display of those parts of nature which attract, and the concealment of those which repel the imagination; but religion must be shown as it is; suppression and addition equally corrupt it; and such as it is, it is known already.

“From poetry the reader justly expects, and from good poetry always obtains, the enlargement of his comprehension, and elevation of his fancy; but this is rarely to be hoped for by christians from metrical devotion. Whatever is great, desirable or tremendous, is comprised in the name of the Supreme Being. Omnipotence cannot be exalted; infinity cannot be amplified; perfection cannot be improved.

“ The employments of pious meditation are faith, thanksgiving, repentance and supplication. Faith, invariably uniform, cannot be invested by fancy with decorations. Thanksgiving, the most joyful of all holy effusions, yet addressed to a being without passions, is confined to a few modes, and is to be felt rather than expressed. Repentance trembling in the presence of the judge, is not at leisure for cadences and epithets. Supplication of man to man may diffuse itself through many topics of persuasion, but supplication to God can only cry for mercy.

“ Of sentiments purely religious, it will be found that the most simple expression is the most sublime. Poetry loses its lustre and its power, because it is applied to the decoration of something more excellent than itself. All that verse can do is to help the memory and delight the ear; and for these purposes it may be very useful; but it supplies nothing to the mind. The ideas of christian theology are too simple for eloquence, too sacred for fiction, and too majestic for ornament; to recommend them by tropes and figures, is to magnify by a concave mirror the sidereal hemisphere.”

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE XII.

And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah; for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, and said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and will do that which is right in his sight, and will give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes; I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee. And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and three score and ten palm-trees; and they encamped there by the waters.—EXODUS XV. 23—27.

UNLESS the mind be under the regulating power of religion, it will be perpetually losing its balance, and changing its tenor: at one time accelerated into indecent and dangerous speed, through the impulse of desire, ambition or revenge; at another it is chilled into languor and inaction, through fear, despondency and disappointment. We shall behold the same person now believing things incredible, and attempting things impracticable; and anon staggering at the shadow of a doubt, and shrinking from the slightest ap-

pearance of difficulty and danger. Insolent, fierce and overbearing in prosperity, the unsteady creature becomes grovelling, dispirited, and mean in adversity. "It is a good thing," therefore, "that the heart be established by grace:" grace, that calm, steady, uniform principle, which veers not with every wind of doctrine; rises not, nor falls, like the mercury in the tube, with every variation of the atmosphere, according to the alternate transition of disappointment and success, censure and applause, health and sickness, youth and age. In the day of prosperity, religion saith to the soul where it dwells, "Rejoice," and in the day of adversity, "Consider:" for a wise and a merciful God hath set the one over against the other. This divine principle corrects immoderate joy, saying to the happy, "Be not high minded, but fear;" it consoles and supports the miserable, by breathing the sweet assurance, that the "light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17.

The want of this balance of the soul, and the dangerous consequences of that want, are strikingly exemplified in the history of the chosen people, whom Providence by a series of miracles undertook to conduct from Egypt to Canaan. Elated or depressed by the aspect of the moment, we find them haughty in the hour of victory, and sunk into despair by a defeat. The *deepness* of the waters of the Red Sea, and their miraculous separation, afford matter of triumph to-day; the *bitterness* of the waters of Marah causes universal discontent and dejection to-morrow. But alas! we need not recur to distant periods of history for an example of the ruinous effects produced by a destitution of religious principle, and of the fatal power of unbelief. The history of every man's own experience is illustration sufficient. To what must we ascribe the envy, jealousy, rage, pride, resentment, timidity, diffidence and dejection, which successively and unremit-

tingly agitate the human mind? Men walk by sight, not by faith. They feel the powers of the world that is, and are insensible of that which is to come. They look at "things temporal," and neglect those "which are unseen and eternal." They stand in awe of the creature, and despise the Creator. While then we discover, deplore and condemn a selfish, a perverse and discontented spirit, and an unbelieving heart, in others, let us study, by the grace of God, to reform the same or like dispositions in ourselves.

What a magnificent concert filled the shores of the Red Sea, after Israel was passed over! Every thing was suited to another. The words were adapted to the occasion, the music to the words, the performers to the music. There Moses, leading the bolder, rougher notes of manly voices; here Miriam the prophetess, his sister, in sweet accord, blending the softer harmony of the female strains with the notes of the timbrel, in praise of their great Deliverer. Never surely did such music strike the vault of Heaven, and never shall again, "till the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; when they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away:" Isa. xxxv. 10—never till the song of Moses be closed with the song of the Lamb.

At length they quit the scene of their terror and of their triumph; for the world admits not of a long continuance of either; and they advance three days march into the wilderness. Escaped effectually and for ever from the oppression of Egypt, no more opposed in front by an insurmountable barrier, nor hemmed in on either side by impassable mountains, nor pursued by a numerous and well disciplined army; but the sea, once their hindrance, now their defence; every foe subdued, and the road of Canaan strait before them, what can now give disturbance? On how many circumstances

does life and the comfort of it depend! The failure or disagreeable quality of one ingredient corrupts and destroys the whole. In Shur they found *no* water; in Marah they find water, but it is *bitter*. The unavoidable condition of a wilderness state! Always too little, or too much! Here there are children and penury; there affluence and sterility. This year there is drought parching and consuming every plant of the field; the next, an overflowing flood sweeping every thing before it; and unhappy mortals are eternally augmenting the necessary and unavoidable evils of human life, by peevishness and discontent.

Oblige an ungrateful person ever so often, and disappoint or oppose him once, and lo, the memory of a thousand benefits is instantly lost. All that Moses, all that God has done for Israel is forgotten, the moment that a scarcity of water is felt. For it is with this spirit as with that of ambition: nothing is attained in the eye of ambition, while there is yet one thing *to be* attained. All the favour of Ahasuerus avails Haman nothing, while Mordecai the Jew sits in the king's gate. So ingratitude says nothing is granted, while one thing is denied me. One scanty meal in Shur, or one unpalatable beverage at Marah, has obliterated all remembrance of the recent wonders of Egypt, and the more recent miracles of the Red Sea. And as one evil quality is ever found in company with its fellows, we here find ingratitude and impiety toward God blended with unkindness and unreasonableness toward man. And cowardice pitifully levels its keen arrows at the servant, not daring to attack the master. "The people murmured against Moses." A worldly mind under distress either flies to the creature for help, or accuses the creature as the cause of its wo. Piety leads the soul directly to God; it views the calamity as his appointment; and finds its removal, its remedy, or its compensation in the divine mercy. Israel tastes

the bitter water; desponds, and charges Moses foolishly. Moses cries to God, and is enlightened.

Observe the goodness and long-suffering of God. Readier to listen to the entreaties of Moses than to punish the perverseness and unbelief of the people, he instantly directs to a cure for the nitrous quality of the waters of Marah. "The Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet."

Of little consequence is it to inquire, because it is impossible to determine, whether the wood of this tree had in it an inherent virtue which naturally corrected the brackish taste of the water; or whether the sweetening quality were preternaturally communicated to it to fulfil the present design of Providence. Whether I see water sweetened by a log of wood cast into it, or issuing from the flinty rock, or flowing naturally in the brook; whether I see Israel fed with bread from Heaven, or Moses and Christ subsisting forty days without bread at all; or mankind in general supported by bread growing gradually out of the ground; I still behold but one and the same object; "good gifts coming down" but in so many different ways "from the Father of lights." The wise man, in the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus, has made a happy use of this passage, to inculcate the necessity of using appointed means in order to obtain success. "The Lord (says he) hath created medicines out of the earth, and he that is wise will not abhor them. Was not the water made sweet with wood, that the virtue thereof might be known? and he hath given men skill, that he might be honoured in his marvellous works. With such doth he heal men, and taketh away their pains. My son, in thy sickness be not negligent; but pray unto the Lord, and he will make thee whole."

A fondness for allegory has represented the effect produced by this tree cast into the water, as emblematic

tical of the virtue of the cross, in sweetening and sanctifying affliction to the believer, and taking the sting out of death. Undoubtedly, when an object so important and a doctrine so instructive can by whatever means be impressed upon the heart, we ought not too squeamishly to reject applications and illustrations of this sort. In order to promote the ends of true piety, what though we relax a little of the laws of rigid criticism? If imagination serve as an handmaid to virtue and devotion, let men be as fanciful as they will. If a serious soul be edified or comforted, shall I mar his joy and disturb his tranquillity by forcing him to comprehend the meaning of Greek and Hebrew particles? Whether it be warrantable or not to give this evangelical turn to the passage before us, its moral intention and import will hardly be disputed. It exhibits the reluctance which men feel to encounter affliction, their impatience and unreasonableness under it, the wise design of Providence in afflictive dispensation, namely, to "prove men, whether they will diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord their God, and do that which is right in his sight." And finally, it illustrates the power, wisdom and goodness of God, in counteracting one natural evil, by another evil; and making poison serve as an antidote to poison, and healing the greater plague of sin by the less, that of suffering.

Some commentators have conjectured, that it was about this very spot that Hagar was relieved and supplied with water, she and her son, by the angel of the Lord, when they were banished from Abraham's house; and they reprove the incredulity of the Israelites by the example of her faith. After all, it was undoubtedly a very severe trial: whether we consider how much water, sweet water, is connected, not merely with the convenience and comfort, but with the very existence of human life; the immense quantity necessary for the support of such a vast multitude of men and women, besides cattle; or the peculiar demand occasioned by

a vertical sun and a parched soil. We pass on from Marah as men, and as the inhabitants of more favoured regions praising God, "who walks upon the clouds," and refreshes us from heaven above; gushes upon us in a thousand streams of limpid comfort from the earth beneath, and gently flows through every field in a tide of delight; and as christians we flee for refuge and refreshment to that *wonderful Man*, described in prophetic vision in such beautiful figures as these; "A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest: as rivers of waters in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," Isaiah xxxii. 2. Gold, silver, and precious stones, are produced in small quantities, and are of difficult and dangerous investigation. And happily the life of man consists not in such things as these. Whereas the things which really minister to human comfort, and constitute the real support of human life, are poured down upon us with unbounded profusion. The choicest blessing which ever was bestowed upon the world, is common and free to all as the water in the stream, as the light and air of heaven.

But though the bitter waters are sweetened for present use, Israel must not think of continuing encamped by them. They are to be but the transient refreshment of the way-faring man, not the stated supply of the land of promise. Whatever we have attained, whatever we enjoy, the voice of Providence still summons us away, saying, "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest."

Their next journeying is from Marah to Elim, where were "twelve wells of water, and three score and ten palm-trees; and they encamped there by the waters." In the preceding station, their provision was partly from nature, partly from the kindness of a gracious Providence. Nature furnished the substance, a miracle endowed it with the suitable qualities. But at Elim, nature seems to do the whole, with her "three-score

and ten palm-trees, and twelve wells of water." And what is nature, but the great JEHOVAH performing the most astonishing wonders in a stated and regular course? Water issuing from a rock when smitten by a rod, is not in itself a whit more miraculous than the continually supplying one little stream from the same spring. Being arrived at Elim, they encamped "by the waters." The word "Elim" standing in our version untranslated, is generally considered as the proper name of a place; but it is by some, and with a great appearance of reason, rendered "THE FORESTS." This is supported by a passage of Strabo,* the famous geographer and historian of Capadocia, to this purpose; that "at five days journey from Jericho there is a forest of palm-trees, which is held in great veneration throughout all that country, on account of the springs of water which are found there in great abundance." The numbers *twelve* and *seventy* in the sacred text, instead of signifying a determinate quantity, may undoubtedly denote indefinitely according to a license common in all languages, a large abundance. And then the account of Strabo, and the narration of Moses, will mutually confirm and strengthen each other. Two writers of no less eminence and credit than Tacitus† and Plutarch‡ plainly allude to this passage, when they say that "the Jews, being ready to perish with thirst, happily discovered springs of running water."

But, instead of settling the geography of the spot, and the import of the word Elim, let us look into the fact recorded, and through it into the volume of human nature. "They encamped there by the waters." The self-same spirit which murmured at the taste of a bitter stream, disposed them to seek repose by the side of one that was sweet and placid. Mistaken in both, a carnal mind is easily unhinged and soon satisfied. Like children they are put out of humour with a straw, and presently pacified they know not why; and be-

* Lib. xvi.

† Hist. Liv. v.

‡ Tom ii. Sympos. Lib. iv.

hold unbelief lying at the root of both one and the other. Now, eager to get home before the time; by and by drowning all thoughts and hopes of it in the bauble of the present hour. See Israel at one time disconcerted and chagrined to find that the wilderness did not produce every thing to a wish; at another, ready to forego the prospect of Canaan for Egypt, and to accept the land of dates and water for that flowing with milk and honey. Never did any good come of sitting down contentedly in temporal possessions. No sooner do men become easy and comfortable in their circumstances, than they grow capricious and fantastical in their wishes and desires. If Providence visit them not with scarcity or unpleasantness of water; their own restless appetite shall visit them with an absurd and unreasonable craving for flesh. The fruit and shade of the palm-tree, and the deliciousness of a fresh spring, please not long. Put an end to novelty, and farewell delight. But a month and fourteen days have elapsed, since with so much joy they quitted the house of bondage: and they are weak and wicked enough to wish themselves thither again. And why? because, in a march of a few short weeks at most, through a wild and desert country, they wallowed not in the profusion of Egypt, which they were obliged to purchase at the price of their liberty and blood.

When we hear of such an universal mutiny, for it was not the murmuring of a few factious discontented spirits, but of the whole congregation of Israel, what have we not to fear from the just resentment of a holy and righteous God, thus insulted by mistrust and unbelief? We find him immediately taking up the cause, and in a manner peculiar to himself. Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth. “And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold I will rain”—what? Fire and brimstone from heaven, upon this generation of incorrigible rebels, until they be utterly consumed? No: but, “I will rain bread from heaven upon you.”

Is this thy manner with men, O Lord God? Surely, "it is of thy mercy we are not consumed, because thy compassions fail not."

The historical fact which follows, as the accomplishment of this promise, is one of the most singular upon record; and so mixes itself with the leading objects of the New Testament dispensation, that it well merits a separate and particular consideration.

Being arrived at another of the great epochas, or periods of ancient history, the going out of Egypt; we shall make a brief recapitulation of the whole from the beginning. The first great period of the history of the world, is from the creation down to the deluge; containing the space of one thousand six hundred and fifty-six years; and a succession of eight lives, from Adam, to the six hundredth year of Noah. The second is, from the flood to the calling of Abraham, and contains four hundred and twenty-seven years; and a succession of ten lives, from the hundred and eighth year of Shem, the son of Noah, to the seventy-fifth of Abraham, the father and founder of the Jewish nation: six of the patriarchs, after the flood, being now dead, Noah, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, and Terah; and four of them still living, Shem, Arphaxad, Salah, and Heber. So that one life, that of Shem, connects the antediluvian world, and the call of Abraham. For he was ninety-eight years old before the flood came; and lived till Abraham was one hundred and fifty, and Isaac fifty years old. The third grand period of the world, containing four hundred and thirty years, commences on the fifteenth day of the month Abib, which answers to the end of our April, or the beginning of May. And some learned chronologists have undertaken to prove, from the scripture history and astronomical calculations, that Abraham departed from Haran, the paschal lamb was sacrificed in Egypt, and Christ expired upon the cross, as the propitiation for the sins of the world, on Calvary, in the identical month of the year, day of the

month, and hour and minute of the day. This period contains a succession of seven lives, including Abraham's from his seventy-fifth year to the eightieth of the life of Moses.

From the creation, then, to the exodus, is the space of two thousand five hundred and thirteen years, and a succession of twenty-four lives. The date of this event, in relation to other important and well known events in the history of mankind, stands as follows: it happened after the death of Abraham, three hundred and thirty years. After the death of Isaac, two hundred and twenty-five. After the death of Jacob, one hundred and ninety-eight. After the death of Joseph, one hundred and forty-four. Before the destruction of Troy, about three hundred. Before the first Olympiad, or the earliest reckoning of time among the Greeks, seven hundred and fourteen. Before the building of the temple, when the Israelitish glory was in its zenith, five hundred and six. Before the Babylonish captivity, nine hundred and sixty-three. Before the building of Rome, seven hundred and thirty-eight. Before Christ was born at Bethlehem, one thousand five hundred fifty-one. Before the present year 1793, three thousand three hundred and forty-four.

What is the conclusion of the whole matter? "A thousand years," O Lord, "in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night," Psalm xc. 4. "Our fathers, where are they? the prophets, do they live for ever?" "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," 2 Pct. iii. 11, 12, 13. "So teach us to

number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom," Psalm xc. 12. "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven," Mat. viii. 11. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," John i. 17. "And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus," Rev. xxii. 20.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE XIII.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel; speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God. And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, this is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.—EXODUS, xvi. 11—15.

MAN, composed of body and spirit, is giving continual indication of the origin from which he springs. His creative imagination, his penetrating understanding, his quickness of apprehension, loftiness of thought, eagerness of desire, fondness of hope; nay, even his erect figure, and a countenance turned upward to the skies, bespeak him the son of God, into whose nostrils Jehovah has breathed the breath of life, and whom he has framed after his own image. On the other hand, appetites perpetually craving a supply out of the earth; the law of his nature, which stretches him in a state of insensibility upon the lap of his mother, for one third of his existence, in order to support

the employments of the other two; and rational powers subjected to the will of sense, show us a creature taken FROM the dust of the ground, always dependent upon it, and hastening to return thitherward again.

Providence permits us not for a moment to forget who and whence we are. Have we laboured an hour or two? Hunger and thirst and weariness irresistibly draw us to the grosser elements of which we are compounded. A little bread and water having dispensed their nourishing virtue, a short sleep having restored our wasted powers, the soul starts up into conscious immortality, it springs forward to eternity, grasps the globe, expatiates from sphere to sphere, ascends to the throne of God himself. At one time, we behold a grovelling contemptible being, all body, absorbed in the low and gross desire of the moment, a fit companion to the beasts that perish; and anon we see that very same wretched creature becoming all spirit, leaving the earth behind him, mixing with angels, and holding fellowship with the Father of spirits.

Religion is constantly aiming at the restoration of our fallen nature, is still exerting her quickening power to raise the bestial into rational, the rational into divine; she graciously employs herself in gradually detaching us from things seen and temporal, and in uniting us to those which are unseen and are eternal. The world, on the contrary, is as constantly striving to degrade, to depress, to extinguish the immortal principle, and to sink the man in the brute. Hence we see the worldling dreaming of much goods laid up for many years, endeavouring to confer duration even upon his sensuality; while Christ teacheth his disciples to pray, saying, "Give us *this* day our daily bread." And by this admonition, he powerfully checks immoderate anxiety about the future. "Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye

shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" Matt. vi. 25, 26.

To teach men their constant dependence, their provision is bestowed in a gradual, daily supply; not in heaps but in handfuls. And when God was pleased miraculously to feed Israel in the wilderness for forty years together, the food of every day came in its day. All attempts to hoard were defeated. Every one's portion was sufficiently ample; and accumulation became a nuisance instead of wealth.

Men, under the impulse of their passions, sluggishly crawl, or eagerly run to the objects of their pursuit; but God is ever advancing towards his in the same steady, majestic pace. When we hear of the birth of Moses, the deliverer of Israel, we immediately conclude that the time of their redemption is now at hand. But behold forty years elapse before a single effort is made for this purpose. And, it is then the feeble effort of a solitary individual to avenge a private wrong; while the general enfranchisement seems rather retarded than accelerated by it; and another period of forty years passes, without one apparent step taken towards public liberty. The fetters of Egypt are at length broken, and Israel is enlarged; but the possession of Canaan is still at a distance; and a third space of forty years consumes that whole generation in the wilderness; and Moses, their conductor, dies at the age of one hundred and twenty years, before the sole of one foot enters into the land of promise, as a possession. So unlike are the preconceptions of erring men to the designs of the infinitely wise God.

When we behold that vast congregation, by such a display of Omnipotence rescued from bondage, conducted through the Red Sea, made to triumph over all their enemies, we are apt to consider them as the

favourites of Heaven, destined to personal honours and possessions. But the event teaches us to correct our hasty judgment, and instructs us that not the particular interests of individuals, but the great interests of the church of God, are the care of Heaven; that, though Aaron and his sons may die, the priesthood ever lives; and that while prophet after prophet retires, it is only to make room for the Prince and Lord of all the prophets.

Of little consequence is it to obtain possession of expected good, unless we be fitted for the enjoyment of it. A nation of slaves was unqualified to exercise the rights and to enjoy the privileges of citizens. Israel had no existence in Egypt but merely a natural one. They had no civil constitution, no laws, no government. To have been conducted directly to Canaan in such a state had been the reverse of a benefit. Providence therefore thought proper to employ a series of years in the wilderness, in training the people for empire, in modelling a government suitable to their future condition, and by enacting wise laws, respecting both religion and civil polity, prepared them for that exalted rank which they were to hold among the nations; and that duration of power and importance, with which the salvation of the whole human race was so closely connected. Thus the eternal decree makes the possession of the heavenly Canaan sure to every heir of glory; which decree, the justifying grace and adopting love of his heavenly Father declare and confirm; but he is not brought home to his Father's house above, till through the school of discipline, and by the Spirit of holiness, he is "made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light."

Men, through impatience and peevishness, miss the very end at which they aim. Canaan flies but the farther off, from being grasped at too soon. The homely provision brought from Egypt was now spent; the milk and honey of Canaan were not yet bestowed

The wilderness naturally produced nothing for food, hardly water to quench their thirst. The wonders of Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the sweetening of the bitter waters of Marah, all, all is forgotten the moment distress comes upon them. "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness." God immediately takes up the cause as his own; but instead of expressing the resentment of an insulted sovereign and benefactor, declares his gracious resolution to overcome this ungracious spirit, by compliance and kindness; and men, unworthy of the meanest earthly fare, have a promise of a daily supply of bread from heaven. But as God does not always withhold in displeasure, so he does not always grant from love. When Providence deigns to indulge the humours and gratify the lusts of men, it is far, very far from being a token for good. A promise of bread in the morning is precious information; but the addition of flesh to the full in the evening wears rather the appearance of a threatening. When our desires exceed the bounds of wisdom, the accomplishment, not the disappointment of them, becomes our punishment.

It is remarkable too, that the luxurious part of their demand was granted before that which was necessary. The quails came in the evening; the manna appeared not till the next morning. Another proof, that the supply granted flowed not from unmixed affection.

Without going at present into any of the critical inquiries which have been pursued, respecting either the name or the nature of this wonderful bread, we proceed to make a few practical observations upon it, founded upon the letter of the history, as it stands in our bible.

First. Then and then only is faith warranted to expect relief from a miracle, when means have been tried without effect; or, when we are in such a situation, that no means can be used with a probability of success. If God in his providence has brought us into

the wilderness, where no corn can grow, where no water flows, we may reasonably look for an interposition from above for our support, which we should expect in vain in a land of corn and vineyards. Where there is a field for the exercise of foresight, industry and diligence, we tempt God instead of honouring him, when we cast our work, and not our care, upon him. And yet it is not uncommon to see a listless, indolent disposition, wanting to pass itself for reliance on the goodness of Heaven. Herod desired to see Christ merely in the view of gratification to an idle curiosity in hope of seeing a miracle performed; but his motive being wrong and unworthy, his desire was not indulged. The Pharisees, from a captious, unbelieving spirit, tempted Christ, “asking a sign from heaven;” but though signs innumerable were every day exhibited in compassion to the miserable and condescension to the weak, no sign but that “of the prophet Jonas,” was given to the self-conceited infidel. JEHOVAH performs the wonders of his power and goodness, neither to save the exertions of the lazy, nor to tickle the imaginations of the curious. His object is not to make men stare and wonder, but to do them good.

Secondly. Men’s happiest estate is to feel his daily, constant dependence upon his Maker, and to see the regular promised supply evincing the truth and faithfulness of its bountiful Author. With a monitor for God pressing in upon us through every avenue of the soul, we are nevertheless apt to be inattentive and unthankful. It is therefore an instance of great goodness, when God is pleased to force himself upon our thoughts, and to invite us to communion with “the Father of our spirits,” in the commerce of a constant habitual friendship. Here then the poor have infinitely the advantage over the rich. They see, or they are blind indeed, they see their “dry morsel and their dinner of herbs,” coming at the expected hour from the bounty of indulgent Heaven. They are not suffered

to be careless, impious and ungrateful. Their homely fare is garnished and seasoned with what gold cannot purchase, nor power compel, the gentle whispers of a Father's love, the kindly welcome of an affectionate friend. And yet the bulk of mankind is striving and straining to get out of this happy state; eagerly catching at a situation which would infallibly betray them into self-sufficiency, insolence and irreligion. That proud word, *independence*, is continually in their mouths, and the thing itself is in their hearts; not considering, that the real happiness of man consists in mutual connexion and dependence, and that the glory and felicity of every rational being is founded upon union with, and a sense of his constant and entire dependence on his Creator.

Thirdly. No fulness and no excellency of created comforts will produce real happiness to rational beings, without the aid of religion. During the abode of Israel in Egypt, the observance of the sabbath had been greatly neglected, if not altogether disused. The religious principle of course must have been much weakened, if not wholly destroyed. There was nothing done, then, till this matter was re-established. For there can be no good government but what is founded upon religion; and religion cannot long exist in any degree of either fervor or purity, where no attention is paid to the Lord's day. Providence, therefore, employed a certain method to point out that day to Israel, and to enforce the observance of it. On that day no manna fell. But to compensate the failure, a double quantity was given the day before; and the manna of that day, contrary to its usual custom, retained its sweetness during the sabbath: it neither melted away, nor became putrid. But, alas! long disuse had so much diminished public respect for the ordinance, that a discipline for forty years is scarcely sufficient to restore it to its ancient dignity and estimation. The restraints of religion are no encroachments on human

liberty. "The sabbath was made for man," a season of rest for his body, a season of contemplation for his mind. It was intended to be his comfort, as a citizen of this world; and his condition as a candidate for another country, that is an heavenly, is closely connected with it. Can the great God be honoured by our resting from the usual employments of life for a seventh part of our time? Surely not: but God is honoured and glorified, when man is made wise, good and happy.

Fourthly. The folly and perverseness of men exhibit a melancholy contrast to the wisdom and goodness of God. The promise of the Almighty gave full assurance of a daily, certain, stated supply. But either through mistrust at one time they attempt to hoard up to-morrow's provision from the superabundance of to-day; or through impiety at another, they violate divine appointment by going out to gather on that day when they were expressly assured they needed to expect none. Thus we are always doing too little or too much; impatiently and impetuously outrunning Providence, or sluggishly and carelessly lagging behind. And what do we get to ourselves, in either case, but disappointment and dishonour? The man who diffidently laboured to accumulate for five days of the week, when he looks upon his store, finds he has been treasuring up to himself nothing but stench and putrefaction; and the Israelite who presumptuously trusted his sabbath-day's entertainment to the manna of that day, must fast for his folly.

Fifthly. Observe the care of Providence to preserve among this highly favoured people a constant sense of their equality. All had their constant supply; every one was entitled to his fair proportion; and no good purpose did it answer to grasp at a double portion. For the hand which miraculously rained down this heavenly bread, miraculously modified it to every one's use. "He who gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack." Now if we

attend to the conduct of Providence to this day, and in every state of the world, we shall find the same equality of distribution still going on. A man has just what he uses and no more. With a chest full of gold, he has a desire to eat but twice or thrice a day at most. With a thousand suits of apparel in his wardrobe, he can use but one at a time. His neighbour, therefore, who has but one dinner, and one coat at once, is, upon the whole, just as rich as he. Beyond what nature requires, reason approves, and the Almighty crowns with his blessing, all is childish and fantastical. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty," Prov. xi. 24. If this were felt and understood as it ought, we should see less eagerness, rapacity and selfishness in one part of mankind, and less unthankfulness and discontent in another.

Sixthly. Mark the danger of giving way to a light, wanton, fanciful disposition. Even manna pleased not long. An imagination filled with the luxurious dainties of Egypt, soon spurned at it, as "light bread." There is no end to wishing and desiring. Unadulterated nature craves but little, and is not difficult to please. But once give the reins to fancy, and the wealth of Cræsus, the magnificence of Solomon, the elegance of Lucullus, and the luxury of Heliogabalus, will soon stink and be despised. Men ate angels' food, and loathed it. Of what importance then must it be, to check in ourselves, and to repress in those whose virtue and happiness are entrusted to our care, the first workings of a wild and fantastical appetite. Children cannot be two simply clothed and fed. Solicit the palate by delicacies, and you kindle a fire in the imagination to which no wealth can administer a sufficient supply of fuel, which no reason can keep within bounds, which will certainly produce a thousand real evils, and render the possession of the real felicities of life tasteless and insipid. Teach young ones to value them-

selves on dress and appearance, and you undermine the fabric of their true consequence. In proportion as you lead them to derive their importance from the adorning of their bodies, you strip and expose their minds.

Seventhly. The same Power which corrupted the manna on the second day, and which preserved it from corruption every seventh day, commanded a small portion to be laid up, for a memorial to future generations; and for that purpose miraculously kept it in its original state of sweetness and perfection. In this we see the absolute subjection of all things to the will of God. They grow and decay, they continue and pass away, they live and perish, just as he will. "I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living." "And I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." No power nor skill can redeem the body from the power of the grave; the arm of an archangel is unable to confine it there.

Finally. The manna from heaven is likewise an image of better things to come. The bread of angels could not confer immortality on those who did eat it: but "the true bread which came down from heaven," communicates eternal life to all who partake of it. But the words of our Saviour himself will best explain this subject. "Jesus saith unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread,

he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day; for my flesh is meet indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever," John vi. 47, &c.

Having thus finished the Course of Lectures proposed for this season,* what remains, but that with a grateful heart I first acknowledge the great goodness of Almighty God, who has graciously lent health and strength for carrying on this undertaking thus far. If any favour of divine things has been felt, or communicated; if scripture truth has, to any, been set in a new or an agreeable light; if a taste for sacred reading and meditation has been conveyed; if the connexion between the Old and New Testament has been pointed

* For the reason assigned, when these discourses were first submitted to the public eye, some of the occasional addresses from the pulpit were retained in the publication. But the Lectures of a season not corresponding exactly to the usual size of a volume, it became at length a matter of doubt, whether these addresses should be altogether suppressed, moddled into a more proper diction and station from the press, or given exactly in the order and words in which they were delivered. The doubt issued in resolving upon the last. This Lecture concluded the Course of the Spring, 1783. The course of the ensuing season commenced with that which follows. Perhaps it was unnecessary to say so much, in explanation of a matter so little important as the conclusion of one discourse and the introduction to another.

out, and impressed upon any heart; and, if the young in particular have been induced, by any thing said in this place, to think for themselves, and to compare spiritual things with spiritual; the Lecturer has gained his end, and is already in possession of his reward. The praise he cheerfully renders to Him to whom it belongs.

To you, my very dear friends, my thanks are in the next place unquestionably due, and are rendered with unfeigned gratitude. Your patient attendance and candid attention, during seven months together, I shall ever consider as a proof of attachment the most flattering and the most encouraging. Why should I conceal my feelings on the occasion? I engaged in this undertaking, at first, with fear and trembling; I proceeded with solicitude; but I conclude with heartfelt satisfaction; because the countenance I have met with encourages me to hope that my labours may have been doing some good. If there be one circumstance which gives me pain, it is the excess of that liberality and approbation which has so far over-rated and overpaid my endeavours, to convey to you useful and pleasing instruction. In return, all I can do, is to wish and pray that your kindness may be returned a thousand fold into your bosoms, in temporal, spiritual and heavenly blessings. And now, my beloved brethren, farewell. To the grace of God I commend you all: even, “to Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; even to the only wise God our Saviour,” Jude 24, 25. That we shall never all meet again in an earthly temple, is certain. For time is hastening to silence the tongue of the preacher, and to close the hearer’s ear. But we have everlasting consolation and good hope, through grace, of meeting together, and of worshipping in that temple, “which has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and

the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no light there," Rev. xxi. 23, 24, 25. Let us, therefore, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 58.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE XIV.

And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide you with me? wherefore do ye tempt the Lord? And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel: and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.—EXODUS xvii. 1, 2, 5, 6.

THE reconciliation of interrupted friendship is one of the chief delights of human life. The extatic pleasure of meeting again, after long absence, persons whom we dearly love, obliterates in a moment the pain of separation: and one hour of sweet communication compensates the langour, solicitude, and gloom of many years. After an interval of five months, I return, to converse with Moses, and to talk of him to you, with the satisfaction of one who has been upon a long journey, and, returning home, finds again those whom he left, those whom he loves; and finds them such as he wishes them to be. Let us, my dear friends,

with increased ardor, affection, admiration and gratitude, renew our intimacy with the venerable man to whom we are indebted for so much rational pleasure, and for so much useful instruction. Moses, thou prince of historians, sublimest of poets, sagest of legislators, clearest-sighted of prophets, most amiable of men! To thee we owe our knowledge of the ages beyond the flood! Thou first taughtest to string the sacred lyre, and to adapt the high praises of God to the enchanting concord of sweet sounds. By thee, king in Jeshurun, all succeeding princes have been instructed how to govern; and lawgivers are formed to political wisdom and sagacity. By thee, Jews were led to expect, and Gentiles are encouraged to rejoice in MESSIAH, the great prophet, after thy similitude; by whom alone thou art excelled. And by thee, sweetest, meekest, gentlest of mankind, the endearing charities of private life are most engagingly exemplified, and most powerfully recommended.

But chiefly thee, O Spirit! thee only, we adore,

—————“ Who didst inspire
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed,
In the beginning, how the heavens and earth
Rose out of chaos.”

Whatever wisdom we may have learned, whatever pleasure we may have enjoyed, whatever comfort we possess, whatever hope we feel—all, all is of thee, pure, eternal, unchanging source of light and life and joy.

Moses, in the passage of his writings which I have now read, is carrying on his own interesting, eventful history. At the head of the myriads of Israel, he is now pursuing his march from Egypt to Canaan, following a guide who could not mislead them, and whom they could not mistake; protected by a power, which, like a wall of fire, bid defiance to every threatening foe; and from day to day supplied by a bounty incapable of being exhausted. All these present and

singular advantages, had the sweetness of hope mingled with them. They had just escaped from the most humiliating and oppressive of all servitude, and they were hastening to the inheritance of their fathers: yet we find them a people as peevish, irritable, and difficult to please, as if they had never known adversity, and as if they had just issued from the lap of ease and indulgence. To day, the bread is dry and stale; to-morrow, the water is bitter; the third day, there is a scarcity of it. The water is sweetened; manna descends; quails fall around their camp; but there is still "a cruel something unpossessed," and all that went before is forgotten; all that is in possession becomes insipid. Bestow on the ungrateful persons nine hundred and ninety-nine favours, and withhold the thousandth, and all you have done for him is lost. The present pressure always seems the heaviest. Mouldy bread and brackish water in the wilderness, are considered as evils more intolerable than all the rigours of slavery in Egypt.

Where does this censure fall? On that moody murmuring race, the Jews, and on them only? Alas! it overwhelms ourselves, it bears hard, not upon individuals here and there, but upon mankind! We expect more from the world than it possibly can bestow; and, when we discover its insufficiency, we charge God foolishly; and because we have not every thing that we wish, we are satisfied with nothing. Solacing ourselves, like Jonah, under the shadow of a gourd, we fancy it is a perennial shelter. We see not the worm which is gnawing its root; and when it is smitten down and withers, we are ready to say, with the sullen, testy prophet, "We do well to be angry."

But, was the want of water a slight evil? And, is it sinful to complain under the pressure of a calamity like this? And, was this the *first* time Israel had been in distress, and found relief? Who was it that sweetened the waters of Marah? Who divided the Red Sea?

Who rained bread from heaven? And, who ever mended his condition by murmuring and discontent? Had God intended to destroy that people, why all this exertion of a strong hand, and stretched out arm to deliver them? God in the failure of our earthly comforts intends not our mortification and ruin, but our wisdom and improvement. He thereby teaches us our dependence; it summons us to the observation of his providence; and levels, not the hope and joy, but the pride and self-sufficiency of man.

Water! precious fluid! infinitely more valuable than the blood of the grape, than rivulets of oil, or honey from the rock; refreshed, sustained every moment by thee, we are every moment wasting, neglecting, forgetting thee. We prize thee not, because of thy rich abundance; and, because thou enterest into every other mean of food and comfort, thy importance is unobserved, thy benefits forgotten. May I never know thy value from the want of thee.

“There was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide you with me? wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?” If in their calmest moments men are often incapable of reasoning justly, and distinguishing accurately, is it any wonder to find them, in the very tide and whirlwind of passion, acting foolishly and unreasonably? Who would envy pre-eminence such as that which Moses enjoyed? Is glory obtained? He comes in but for a moderate share. Is blame incurred, or distress felt? All is imputed to him. To what a severe trial was the temper of this meekest of all men now put! What so provoking as to meet with censure when we are conscious of meriting praise? What so galling as to have the calamities of others charged upon us as crimes; to be accused as culpable, merely because we have been unfortunate?

Surely the great are set in "slippery places;" and "uneasy must the head lie that wears a crown."

We see Moses flying in the hour of danger, whither the people ought to have fled in the hour of their affliction. "He cried unto the Lord." Religion opens a refuge when every other refuge fails; and it administers a remedy to ills otherwise incurable. I tremble for the life of Moses. He trembles for himself. "They are almost ready to stone me." The voice of Jehovah is again heard, and Moses is in safety. But I tremble now, for these murmuring, unbelieving, rebellious Israelites: Is not the thunder of His indignation going to burst out? Is not the fire hastening to consume? Or, is the earth going to open her mouth, and swallow them quick up into the pit? Behold a solemn preparation is making! But it is an arrangement of love. It is the voice of God I hear: but it speaks mercy and peace. The tremendous rod of God, wherewith he bruised and broke Egypt, is again employed; but not as the instrument of punishment to Israel. It smites, not a sinful people, but the flinty rock; and it draws forth, not a stream of blood from the heart of the offender, but a stream of water to cool his tongue, and to restore his fainting soul. Surely, O Lord, "thy ways are not as our ways: for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are thy ways higher than our ways, and thy thoughts than our thoughts," Isa. lv. 8, 9. "Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off," Rom. xi. 22. Astonishing instance of the power and sovereignty of the Most High! The same rod which smote the river, and it became blood, smites the rock, and it becomes streams of water. Who is to be feared, who is to be trusted, but the God who can do these great things?

How honourable had it been for Israel, to have had

this stage of their marching through the wilderness, distinguished by a name which betokened and commemorated their faithfulness, obedience and submission. Instead of this, the names *Massah* and *Meribah*, must transmit to all generations the memory of *temptation*, *chiding*, and *strife*. Happily the monuments of human frailty, folly and guilt, are also the monuments of the divine patience, forbearance and tender mercy. “But the law had only a shadow of good things to come.” Where Moses leaves us, Isaiah takes us by the hand, and leads us on our way, pointing to Him whom all prophecy revealed, and saying, “Behold a King shall reign in righteousness and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land,” Isa. xxxii. 1, 2. And the apostle of the Gentiles conducts our weary wandering steps from the rock in Horeb to the rock Christ, from whence issues the mighty “river, which makes glad the city of God;” and which affords, not a transitory, temporary refreshment, but a perpetual never-failing supply. “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ,” 1 Cor. x. 1, &c. The words of the apostle insinuate, that the stream which issued from the rock in the wilderness continued to flow, and accompany their progress through the desert during the remainder of their long pilgrimage, till, being arrived at the land of promise, a land watered with the dew of heaven, and the abundance of the rivers, a miraculous supply being unnecessary, was withdrawn.

Thus was the gospel preached to them of old time. The solid rock became, as it were, moveable; “and followed them” wheresoever they went. The adamant was melted into a pool for their refreshment. Blessed type of Him who in his own person accommodated the immutability of the divine nature to the necessity and the relief of human misery! Blessed type of that stream of blood flowing from the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and “which taketh away the sins of the world!” Blessed type of that “consolation that is in Christ Jesus,” for the weary and heavy laden, for the guilty and the wretched, for the faint and dying! Blessed type of that precious stream which has flowed in every age, and is flowing to every nation and people under heaven; and which never leaves the path of the Zion-traveller, till, through the midst of Jordan, he stands on the delightful shore of the Canaan that is above, where it becomes “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, there is the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yeildeth her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it: and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face: and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun: for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever.” Rev. xxii. 1, &c.

In the recapitulation of this wonderful history in the book of Numbers, an interesting and important circumstance is recorded, which in Exodus is suppressed; and which we must here insert, that we may view the event complete in all its parts, and that we may feel it in all its force. The miracle of extracting water from

the rock, which proved so salutary to the people, became fatal to Moses himself. And this he, with his native candor and simplicity, thus relates; "And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them," Numb. xx. 9, &c. For the illustration and improvement of which, we beg your attention to the following remarks.

Observe, first, The credit which is due to the sacred writers in general, and to Moses in particular, for their fidelity and integrity in relating those particulars of their temper and conduct which are the object of censure and condemnation, as well as those which merit applause. Indeed, they do both with the same "simplicity and godly sincerity." They never appear solicitous to celebrate their own praise, and if glory may redound to God, and edification to men, they honestly publish their own shame. Unlike the generality of mankind, who are perpetually catching at opportunities to introduce their dear selves, that they may be valued and admired: and, with equal anxiety, drawing a veil over their errors and imperfections. But these holy men delivered not their testimony "according to the will of man," nor in the spirit of the world; but, "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." And, with candid judges, this candour of theirs will be deemed no slight argument of their veracity in general, and no slender proof of the credibility of the scripture history.

Secondly, Remark the mixture of frailty and imperfection which enters into every human character. Moses himself is not faultless. And what is more observable still, he fails on the side of his greatest excellency; he is found weak there where he seemed most strong. "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth," Numb. xii. 3. Nevertheless, what saith the history? He loses temper, and speaks unadvisedly with his lips; "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" xx. 10. He takes glory to himself instead of ascribing it to God: "Must *we* fetch you water?" He presumptuously exceeds his commission. He lifts up his hand and *smites* the rock *twice* with his *rod*, whereas he was commanded only to *speak* unto it, before the eyes of the people.

Seems it not as if God intended to write vanity and shame on all the glory of man, "that no flesh should glory in his presence?" by showing us faithful Abraham mistrusting his God, and seeking refuge in falsehood: the patient Job growing peevish, and, "cursing his day:" the affectionate and zealous Peter basely denying his Master; and the meek and gentle Moses waxing warm, and in his haste speaking disrespectfully of God, and unkindly of men. "Be not high minded, but fear." "Let him who thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life," Prov. vi. 23. "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, keep the door of my lips," Psalm cxli. 3.

Observe, thirdly, The delicacy and the danger of assuming a latitude and a liberty in sacred things. In what concerns the conduct of human life, and our intercourse one with another as the citizens of this world, many things must be left to be governed by occasion and discretion, but, in what relates to the immediate worship of God, and where the mind of the Lord has been clearly made known, to assume and exercise a

dispensing power is criminal and hazardous. The tabernacle must be constructed, to the minutest pin and loop, according to the pattern delivered in the mount. If Uzzah presume to put forth his hand to support the tottering ark, it is at his peril. A holy and a jealous God will be served only by the persons and in the manner which he himself has appointed; and the intruder into sacred offices and employments is ready to be broken in upon in hot displeasure. Has God said, “*Speak to the rock.*” Who has the boldness to *strike* it? Moses dares to do it; and his rashness forfeits his title to a part and lot in the promised inheritance. Into Canaan he shall never enter, but only see it at a distance with his eyes. The offending, chiding, murmuring congregation is pitied, forgiven and relieved. The offending, hasty, presumptuous prophet is punished. “Our God is a consuming fire.” “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.”

Remark, in the fourth place, The rashness and folly of man shall not, cannot render the purpose of God of none effect. A whole people shall not be permitted to perish for thirst because the prescribed mode of relief has not been exactly followed. Though the rock be stricken, instead of being spoken unto, it shall not fail to yield the promised fountain of water. Moses is frail, but God is good. There has prevailed, since the beginning, a strange contention between the folly and perverseness of the fallen apostate creature, and the wisdom and goodness of the gracious Creator. And, glory be to God, our evil is overcome of his good. And when all struggle and opposition are at an end, when the will of God shall finally prevail, “and every high thought shall be brought into captivity to the will

of Christ," it shall then be found, "that the wrath of man" has all along been "working the righteousness of God; that the elementary strife which was permitted to take place in the natural world; the jarring, discordant passions which seemed to convulse and disturb the moral government of God, and even the infernal devices of the powers of darkness, were all, without their design, nay, contrary to their intention, carrying on the great plans of the divine providence to their consummation. Glorious, transporting thought! I will henceforth command my troubled soul into peace. I will calmly wait the issue, and leave it to the great God, in his own time and way, to explain the reasons of his conduct, and fully vindicate his ways to men. The troubles which I see, the troubles which I feel, the troubles which I fear, though they may come nigh, shall not overwhelm my soul; "I shall not be afraid when I hear of evil tidings; my heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord," Psalm cxii. 7. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose," Rom. viii. 28. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17.

Fifthly, When we behold a holy and righteous God thus severely punishing, what may be deemed, by some, a slight offence, in one of the dearest and best of his children, let none dare to trifle with his justice. If Moses, in one rash moment, by one unadvised step, incurred a displeasure which he could never remove, and forfeited an inheritance, which he never was able to recover, what hast thou, O man, to expect, whose whole life has been an accumulation of offence; has been the addition only of sinfulness to weakness, and of presumption to folly? "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1 Peter iv. 18. Take care how you estimate the malignity, guilt and danger of sin, by the erroneous

and fluctuating standard of your own weak understanding, or still weaker passions. Not according to these, nor the maxims of the world, nor the prejudices of a misguided spirit; but by a steadier rule, by an unchanging law, thou shalt be judged, and finally justified or condemned. If Moses lost an inheritance in an earthly Canaan for neglecting to give glory to God in one instance, tremble to think of being eternally excluded from "the inheritance of the saints in light," for ten thousand offences of the same nature. Beware of reckoning any transgression small, any sin venial, any temptation contemptible. Behold the mighty fallen, and be humble.

It is truly affecting to find Moses in the sequel earnestly entreating a remission of the sentence, but entreating in vain; and, when unable by supplication to prevail, submissively resigning himself to the will of God. But the world has seen a still more awful demonstration of God's displeasure at sin. When the Lord laid upon the head of the great atonement "the iniquity of us all; it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief." "God spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all." Is it possible to conceive a motive so cogent to abstain from evil, and even from the appearance of it; and to loathe and put off from us the garment spotted with the flesh?

But again, one offence, though it may provoke the anger and call down the chastisement of a holy God, breaks not off all intercourse, and for ever, between him and a good man. With the firmness of a wise and just father, he denounces the punishment and inflicts it. With the tenderness and love of a gracious and relenting parent, he carries on the correspondence; and even admits the offending child to closer intimacy, and to familiarity more endearing. For the great God is not like them who mar and embitter their pardon with hard conditions, cruel upbraidings, and mortifying recollections; and who plainly show, that

though they may be capable of forgiving, they know not what it is to bury injuries in everlasting forgetfulness. The conduct of Moses too, under the weight of this awful displeasure, is amiable and instructive. He mutters not, with sullen Cain, "my punishment is greater than I can bear;" he sinks not into dejection; he replies not in resentment. While he deprecates the penalty, he attempts not to extenuate the guilt of his crime; and though well assured he is not to have the honour of conducting Israel into Canaan, nor the happiness of enjoying a personal possession in that promised inheritance, yet he withdraws himself from no particular duty, relaxes not his diligence, cools not in his zeal: he labours to the last, does what he can, though he be not permitted to do what he would; he goes before Israel to the land of promise, though access into it was denied him. This, as much as any thing in his history, marks his character and evinces the greatness of his soul. And this teaches a lesson of no mean importance in friendship among men, namely, to cultivate with diligence and assiduity the charities which we have in common, and to suffer those things to rest and sleep, which, if stirred and awakened, are likely to disturb and separate us.

It is not the design of Providence that we should think exactly the same way on all points. But, shall I agree with my brother in nothing, because we happened to differ in one thing?

I detain you till I have made only one remark more upon the whole history. The distress of the cattle for want of water, is mentioned as a circumstance of importance both in the books of Exodus and Numbers, and it is especially attended to in the miraculous relief which Heaven provided. Is the great God degraded, when he is represented as "caring for oxen, and feeding the ravens, and hearing the young lions when they cry?" No, no; these minuter views of his providential care and kindness, endear him but the

more to the understanding that discerns, and the heart that feels. I know not a more tender stroke of the pathetic eloquence than that which we have in the prophecy of Jonah, when God extended mercy in a manner peculiar to himself, to Nineveh, that great and sinful city. "Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle?" Jonah iv. 10, 11.

One stage more will bring us with Israel to the foot of Sinai, to observe and to improve one of the most notable dispensations of Providence upon record; "The giving of the law." But here let us pause, with devout acknowledgment of that bountiful hand, which fed the seed of Abraham immediately from the clouds for forty years together; and which feeds us, through rather a longer process, by blending and compounding the qualities and influences of earth, air, fire and water. While we adore the providential care which refreshed Israel by streams from the rock, let us rejoice together, that it refreshes us by keeping our rivers ever flowing, our fountains constantly supplied, and the clouds of our atmosphere, in their season, always impregnated with the rain and the dew. "With the bread that perisheth," gracious God! grant us that "which endureth to life everlasting." Amen.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE XII.

Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek:—And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses's hands were heavy; and they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat thereon: and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.—EXODUS xvii. 8—13.

NOTHING can be more afflicting to a humane and serious mind, than to reflect on that strife and contention which have in every age deluged the world with human blood. Who could believe, if all history did not prove it, and who can think of it without horror, that men should be continually lying in wait, like beasts of prey, to catch and devour men; that the strong, the cunning and the fierce should be for ever on the watch, to take advantage of the weak, the simple and the gentle? And must it be? Farther of mercies! must it needs be, that war should continue to waste the nations? Shall the earth be for ever a field of blood?

Must the peace of private families, and the repose of kingdoms, be eternally disturbed by lust and pride, avarice and ambition, envy and revenge? Blessed God! send forth the Spirit of thy Son into the hearts of men. Prince of peace! command this troubled ocean into a calm. Spirit of love! put a full end to bitterness and wrath. Subdue this carnal mind, which is enmity against God. Glorious gospel of salvation! as thou bringest good-will from God to men, restore good-will to men among themselves.

It is difficult to say whether men suffer most from their own folly, or from the cruelty and injustice of others. We generally find, that when evil from without would, for a while, permit wretched mortals to breathe and be at peace, they perversely become self-tormentors, and ingeniously contrive sources of vexation to themselves. And, which is the greater evil of the two? That, undoubtedly, of which we are the authors to ourselves. We have, then, to encounter an enemy from whom we cannot hope to escape, and whom we are unable to overcome. From a conflict with Amalek, Israel comes off with both credit and comfort; but a strife of discontent, impatience and rebellion against God, must of necessity issue in shame and loss.

God, rich in mercy, slow to anger, and of great kindness, has graciously forgiven the murmuring at Horeb, and extracted water from the rock, for the relief of his people. But this wo is no sooner past than another overtakes them. "Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim." The transaction recorded here, so simply and uncircumstantially, is mentioned again in Deuteronomy, with many circumstances of aggravation, which greatly increase our detestation of this conduct in Amalek, and explain the deep resentment which a holy and righteous God himself expresses upon the occasion, and which by a positive statute he transmits to Israel. "Remember what Amalek did

unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it," Deut. xxv. 17, 18, 19.

Amalek, the father of this nation, as we learn from Genesis xxxvi. 12. was grandson to Esau, and son to Eliphaz, by a concubine named Timna. The Amalekites indeed are mentioned much earlier in scripture, even in the days of Abraham, when Chederlaomer is represented, with his victorious army, as ravaging all their country. But it is well known that the sacred writers, when treating of various periods, give appellations to regions and countries which did not belong to them till ages afterwards, but by which they were better known at the time when the historian wrote. They possessed a large tract of country, extending from the confines of Idumea to the eastern shore of the Red Sea; and from their neighbourhood to and commerce with Phœnicia, they are by some called Phœnicians.

Immediately on their passing through the Red Sea, it behoved the children of Israel to enter into this territory, on their way to Canaan. And probably the paternal relation which subsisted between them and Amalek, encouraged the posterity of Jacob to advance on their way with greater confidence. "It is the land of our brethren through which we are to pass," would they say, one to another. "The heart of Esau himself relented, when he saw his brother Jacob return, encumbered with a train of women and children and cattle. He forgot his resentments; he became the protector of the man whom he had, in the hour of passion, vowed to destroy. The injury done him

in the matter of the birth-right, and of the blessing, he generously forgave. Surely the posterity of Esau, after many generations, will not revive a quarrel which is extinguished and forgotten, first in the reconciliation, and then in the death of the original parties to it. After a servitude so long and so bitter in Egypt, we shall at length find a time and a place to breathe; and the soothing of fraternal love shall console us for the rigors of oppression."

Vain expectation! What foe so dreadful as a brother disaffected! Egypt smote with the rod; Amalek smites with the sword; he basely, cruelly seizes the moment of Israel's langour, weakness and dejection, and attempts to crush those whom a sanguinary tyrant had persecuted, and whom Heaven itself had bruised. The cowardice of this behaviour is equal to the unkindness of it. Had they boldly appeared at the first, to dispute the passage of the Red Sea, and to repel by force of arms the invasion of their country, their conduct, though ungenerous and unkind, had been ingenuous and manly. But, either through fear or policy, they permit Israel to advance, they watch the moment of their difficulty and distress, and, like dastards, steal upon the rear of an army whose front they dared not to oppose.

Neither good qualities nor bad are found single in the human breast. And, in the nation whose character is now the object of our censure, we find a combination of the worst qualities of which our nature is capable, all originating in the deficiency of one great principle, which is at the root of all the evil which men commit, "he feared not God." Why did Amalek rake up the ashes of an ancient grudge? "He feared not God." Why did he join to afflict the miserable, and overwhelm the oppressed? "He feared not God." Why did he meanly attack the weaker and more vulnerable part of his adversary, in hope of safety and impunity? "He feared not God." Where-

fore in general, are men subtle, revengeful, cunning and selfish? They “fear not God;” they “harden themselves against him,” and yet think “to prosper.” They “love not their brother whom they have seen,” because they are wilfully ignorant of or hate God, “whom they have not seen.”

Such is the union which Providence has established between all the parts of the natural and of the political body, that the weakness or distress of one member is the infirmity and suffering of the whole. The hindmost and the feeble of Israel are smitten; the foremost and the strong feel and immediately resent it. “And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill, with the rod of God in mine hand.” We have here a combination which ought never to be separated, and in which safety and success are ever to be found, namely, the acknowledgment of Heaven, and the use of appointed means, the sword in the hand of Joshua, the rod in that of Moses, the embattled host below in the valley, the intercessor with God “wrestling,” and “making supplication” upon the hill. In vain had Moses prayed if Joshua had not fought. Destitute of “the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man,” the skill and courage of the warrior had failed before the enemy. The rod of God! in how many different services is it employed! how many various purposes does it answer! It smites the river of Egypt, and it becomes blood. It smites the rock in Horeb, and it sends forth a stream of water. It is extended towards heaven, on the top of the hill, and Amalek is destroyed. Striking and instructive type of that “rod of God’s mouth” wherewith “he slays the wicked:” of that sword of the Spirit, “which is the word of God: of that hammer, which breaketh the rock in pieces:” of that gospel, which is “a savour of God in them that believe, and in them that perish.”

Observe how God appoints to every man his station

of usefulness and importance. It was not for want either of zeal or courage, that Moses takes his post at a distance on the hill. It is not for want of piety, that Joshua leads on the armies of Israel on the plain. The mistakes and miscarriages of the world arise from the weakness and wickedness of men; at one time over-rating their talents, and thrusting themselves forward into situations for which they are wholly unfit; and at another, through timidity shrinking from the duties of that station which Providence has assigned them; and a third, treacherously, through some bias of private interest, passion or party, selling the trust committed to them, to the foe. Happily in the case before us, the head which directed, and the hand which executed, were in perfect unison. The spirit that fought, and the spirit that prayed, were one.

Let us first ascend the hill with Moses and his two friends, and adopt the feelings of men, who at once felt for the public cause, were not without well-founded apprehensions from the common enemy, and at the same time feared and trusted the Lord. Moses has given his orders to Joshua, and he has so far done well: but to stop there had been doing nothing. He has set the means to work, and now he can confidently look up to Heaven for that blessing which can give success to the means. He ascends to meet God, but ascends not alone. As wickedness seeks to fortify and to keep itself in countenance by the society of the wicked, so the fire of devotion keeps itself alive by the sacred communication of a kindred flame. The hands of Moses alone had soon become feeble, and must have dropped down, and Amalek finally have prevailed; supported by Aaron and Hur, they continue "steady till the going down of the sun;" and Amalek and his people are discomfited with the edge of the sword.

Of Aaron, one of the companions of Moses upon the mount, we know much; of Hur, the other, the

scripture account is more sparing. Those who are never at a loss so long as fancy and invention can create, make him the son of Caleb, and the husband of Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron. It appears from the history, that he was the father of Uri; and the grandfather of Bezaleel, the famous artist, employed, by special endowment and appointment of Heaven, for the construction of the more curious and costly furniture of the tabernacle and sanctuary. But it is of more importance for us to know him, and for him to be reported, as a person of the first quality, and his quality supported by that which gives rank its highest lustre, genuine piety. Moses left him, in commission with Aaron, to judge the people, when a short while after this he went up alone into Mount Sinai to meet God. This is argument sufficient of his high rank; and the assumption of him to assist his devotion in Mount Horeb, while Israel was engaged with Amalek, is a proof equally clear and decisive of his extraordinary piety.

Behold then the man of God, supported and encouraged by two such companions, discovering all the honest anxiety of the patriot, together with all the confidence and fervour of the saint; with his eyes eagerly bent on the conflicting armies in the plain below; and his hands, with his heart, lifted up to God in the heavens, from whom his help came. It was clearly the intention of Providence, that the deliverance which should be wrought for Israel on this occasion, though not wholly independent on the use of means, should evidently appear to flow chiefly and only from the interposition and grace of Heaven. "It came to pass when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, that Amalek prevailed."

This is the first battle which Israel was called to fight; and it was designed to be a model of all that should follow; of assured success to them, and victo-

ry over all their enemies, provided they constantly acknowledged God, with hands continually lifted up to heaven. And it had undoubtedly a farther view, namely, to represent in general, the powerful and certain effect of prayer to God, and of a sense of dependence upon him; to show that our strength is in exact proportion to the perception of our own weakness, and to our confidence in almighty grace. The lesson inculcated in this history is the same which Christ taught his disciples in the parable of the unjust judge and the importunate widow, "That men ought always to pray, and not to faint," Luke xviii. 1. If importunity and the love of ease have power to constrain a man to do his duty, though he have no inclination to it, how much more certain the effect of earnestness and importunity with the Hearer of prayer, the Father of mercies; who is ever more ready to grant than man to ask? "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Matt. vii. 11.

Have you considered then, my christian friend, what a powerful instrument is put into your hand, mighty as the rod of God in the hand of Moses, wherewith he did wonders? "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit," James v. 17, 18. Surely then "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," James v. 16. God has not given you assurance of success in your undertakings, but he has bestowed upon you the privilege, and promised you the spirit of prayer, by which you shall certainly obtain one of two things; either that blessing from above upon your honest endeavours, which maketh rich, which insures success, and makes it durable; or, that

resignation of spirit, and submission to the will of God, which subdue misfortune, and which turn calamity and disappointment themselves into advantage. God has not given thee, my friend, the promise of riches; but he has given thee, what is much better, the spirit of grace and supplication to form thy soul to contentment. You have no security against pain and sorrow; but you have that which produces patience and fortitude. You cannot promise yourself long life; but habitual intercourse with God by prayer overcomes the fear of death.

Glorious privilege! Whatever my situation in life be, here is something to improve it, if good; something to mend it, if evil. Here is the ornament and essence of prosperity, the cure and cordial of adversity. Here is the guardian and the guide of life; the sweetner and subduer of death. Prayer brings all the glorious perfections of Deity into our possession. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him," James i. 5. "When I am weak, then am I strong;" "for I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Is the thorn not removed, the messenger of Satan not rebuked, though the Lord be thrice besought that they may depart? No matter. Is it not said, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness? Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me," 2 Cor. xii. 9.

But where are the hands which never hang down? Those of Moses himself became heavy. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Fatal omen to Israel! Amalek instantly gains the ascendant. But happily, Moses was not alone in the mount: "And they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other

side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun." "As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend;" and so devotion kindles and keeps alive devotion. Secret prayer, like the melody of one sweet-toned voice stealing upon the ear, gently wafts the soul to heaven: social worship, as a full chorus of harmonized sounds, pierces the sky, and raises a great multitude of kindred spirits to the bright regions of everlasting love, and places them together before the throne of God. How happy are Aaron and Hur, in lending this aid to the wearied hands of Moses, and to the declining interest of the Israel of God! How happy is Moses in being thus supported! But there is an Intercessor whose hands never hang down, whose fervour never cools, whose mediation never fails, whose attention is never relaxed. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." Him "the Father heareth always:" "as a Prince he hath power and prevaileth."

Let us now turn our eyes to the struggle in the valley below. There we meet "the confused noise of the warrior, and garments rolled in blood:" the alternate shouts of acclamation and triumph, mingling with the piercing shrieks of the wounded, and the groans of the dying. Israel, now hurrying on to victory, and anon flying before the insulting foe. The event for a while is awfully in doubt; turning upon the strength and feebleness, not of thousands, but of one single arm; decided at length, not by the edge of the sword, but the elevation or depression of a rod; and that rod swayed, not by the skill and prowess of Joshua, but the firmness and devotion of Moses.

But now, doubt and anxiety are at an end. The hands of Moses are propped up, and Israel finally prevails. And what heart save that of an Amalekite but must rejoice in the issue? "The cunning is taken in his own craftiness." A design of violence and blood falls

upon the head of him that contrived it. The righteous and innocent cause bears down pride and cruelty. We behold the destination of Heaven standing good, the birthright sold away, the blessing anticipated, the elder made subject to the younger. "God is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?" Job ix. 4.

Israel has conquered. But it is impossible to mistake the means by which he has gotten the victory. "The hand of the Lord, and his holy arm, they have gotten him the victory." The altar therefore, which was built to celebrate this signal success, shall by its name perpetuate the remembrance of God the deliverer. Jehovah-Nissi, "the Lord my banner," was inscribed upon it by the divine appointment; and a reason is assigned in the sixteenth verse. "For he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

These words, having been variously rendered, have given occasion to various opinions among interpreters. Some read the passage thus, "Because the hand of Amalek is against the throne of the Lord, the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." This reading resolves the guilt of Amalek, not into an insidious and cruel design against Israel, but into a rash and impious attempt to defeat the plan of Providence, which was to bring Israel into the quiet possession of Canaan, and to exalt that nation favoured of God but envied of man, to wealth, power and empire. God therefore was pleased to vindicate in person the cause which was his own, and to write disappointment and a curse upon every plan which Amalek could form, of greatness and prosperity. So "fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God," so dangerous to form a combination "against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision," Psal. ii. 2, 3, 4.

Others literally translate the words thus, "With the hand upon the throne of the Lord, *he* hath sworn that he will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." *He*, that is Moses, hath sworn, with the most awful solemnities, and recorded the oath in a book for perpetual preservation, that there shall be no peace between Israel and Amalek till he be utterly destroyed. The hand which was extended towards heaven, the throne of the great and terrible God, with the rod in it; the instrument of a victory which was interrupted by the going down of the sun, has been lifted up, to "swear by Him that liveth for ever," that the triumph of that day shall be followed up, till the hated name of Amalek be extinguished from under heaven.

Some make Jehovah himself to be the person who binds himself by this solemn oath. "*The* hand," that is, Jehovah's own hand, upon the throne of the Lord. "Because he could swear by no greater, he hath sworn by himself, that *He* will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." We have a prophecy in the mouth of Balaam to the same effect; "And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations, but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever," Numb. xxiv. 20.

The execution of this dreadful sentence was reserved to the days of Samuel, four hundred and twelve years after; and was committed to Saul, who through an impolitic and sinful lenity, failed to fulfil the design of Providence, and thereby incurred the displeasure of Heaven, and forfeited his life and crown by his disobedience. I transcribe the passage.

"Samuel also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel; how he laid wait

for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass," 1 Sam. xv. 1, 2, 3. This order Saul obeyed but in part. He assumed and exercised a dispensing power, and it became a snare to him. He took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive; and reserved the best of the spoil. The prophet is sent of God to reprove his disobedience; which Saul attempting to palliate, brings down this censure upon his head. "When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel? And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord? And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king," 1 Sam. xv. 17, &c. Has God commanded to destroy? Who shall presume to save? Has he commanded to spare? Who dares destroy? "I say unto you, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forwarn you whom you shall fear: fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him," Luke xii. 4, 5.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE XVI.

And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him: and they asked each other of their welfare: and they came into the tent. And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh, and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the Lord delivered them. And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. And Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them. And Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses's father-in-law before God.—EXODUS xviii. 7—12.

THE great Author and Ruler of the world has evidently in view the pleasure and happiness, as well as the wisdom and virtue of his rational creatures. We find through the widely expanded frame of nature, and the extensive plan of Providence, as many sources of joy as there are means of improvement. What an infinite, beautiful and pleasing variety in the works and in the ways of God! all ministering to human com-

fort, all aiming at making men good. The mind of man is formed to desire and relish variety. The objects with which he is conversant are therefore varied without end, to gratify that desire, and to correspond with that relish. The glare of perpetual sunshine and the fervid heat of an eternal summer, would speedily oppress and destroy mankind: but, relieved by the tranquillity of darkness, the freshness of spring, the sedateness of autumn, and even the gloom of winter, they become no less grateful than they are beneficial. In surveying the globe, the eye is not permitted to tire by having to crawl along a boundless plain; but sparkles with delight as it springs from valley to valley, and from hill to hill. And even the glories of the starry heavens are rendered still more glorious by being kept in continual motion; and thereby are made continually to exhibit a different appearance.

The events of human life, for the same reason, are endlessly variegated like the objects of sense. Wretched were the dull stagnation of constant prosperity, success and ease. Intolerable would be the agitation and distress of unceasing, unabating, unrelenting toil, pain, disappointment and vexation of spirit. But, one thing being set over against another, the great, the prosperous and the happy are for ever admonished, reprov'd and brought low; the poor, the despised and the miserable are cheered, supported and exalted.

The word of God exhibits a resemblance to the system of nature, and to the conduct of Providence. In it we have the same pleasing, engaging variety; the same happy accommodation to the tastes, occasions and necessities of mankind. The antiquarian and the naturalist, the politician and the legislator, the poet and the philosopher, the moralist and the divine, the man of retirement and the man of the world, the man of reason and the man of fancy, all find in scripture an helper toward the discovery of truth, and the attainment of happiness; a guide to the understanding,

a corrector and supporter of the imagination, a comforter of the heart, a teacher of wisdom, a rule of faith, a source of joy.

The very structure of the sacred compositions is inimitably calculated, by a beautiful and easy transition from subject to subject, and from scene to scene, to relieve and yet to preserve the attention; presenting always a new and interesting object, or the same object placed in a new and interesting light. Thus the tumultuous, noisy and bloody scenes of Horeb and Rephidim—scenes of murmuring, rebellion and war, are happily relieved by scenes of domestic tranquillity, love and joy; and we are prepared to attend Moses, to meet God in the mount, by mixing in the virtuous, cheerful and affectionate intercourse of his private family.

Let us then thankfully take the relief which a gracious God has in his word provided for us; and contemplate one of those calm, but neither uninteresting nor uninstructional representations of human life, which come home to the bosom and the fire-side of every man who has a heart, who has a relation, who has a friend.

The history of Moses now looks back, and reminds us of his being “a stranger in a strange land;” namely, of his fleeing from Egypt into Midian, of his arriving there, conducted of Providence, just at the moment to render a seasonable service to the daughter of Raguel, or Jethro, the priest of Midian; of the hospitable reception afforded him by that worthy man, and of the alliance which he formed with him, by marrying his daughter Zipporah. Upon his being called back to Egypt to undertake the weighty charge which God had assigned him, he had intended and attempted to carry his wife and children along with him. But being reprov'd of God by the way for neglecting in his own family the right of circumcision, the seal of God's covenant, and, either specially admonished from

Heaven, or following the dictates of human prudence, he sends them all back to his father-in-law, as likely to prove either a burden or a hindrance to himself, in the discharge of his great trust. For true piety, while it reposes entire confidence in God, will never presumptuously load Providence with what is the proper work and business of man. Diligence and foresight, as well as faith and hope, are its genuine offspring. But the tempest being now blown over, and Moses of a messenger and a suppliant unto Pharaoh, being now become the head and leader of a great nation, it was natural for him and for his family mutually to desire to be restored to each other. Jethro, therefore, having received information where Israel was, and what the Lord had done for them, takes his daughter and grandchildren, and carries them with him to the camp of Israel.

The innocent endearments of natural affection, and the honest communications of private friendship, are graciously intended to alleviate the cares of public life, and to strengthen the mind by diverting it from incessant and intense application to serious business. No man can always be a general, a statesman or a king. And happy it is for those who occupy these exalted but troublesome stations, that they are frequently permitted to sink the public in the private character, and to drop the hero, the senator, the judge, the sovereign, in the man.

Distance has not alienated affection between the man of God and his family. A slighter affection is effaced and destroyed by absence; a stronger love is confirmed and inflamed by it. Good old Jethro satisfies not himself with sending by the mouth of another a compliment of congratulation to his son-in-law; neither will he permit Zipporah and her sons to go unaccompanied, unprotected, through the wilderness; but, aged and infirm as he was, chooses himself to be their companion and their protector.

Moses seems to take delight in delivering to us this passage of his life. He is amiably minute and circumstantial in the detail of it. He dwells upon the tender and affecting recollections of sorrows and of joys that are past. His heart is in it. He stops in his narration to tell us the names of his two sons, and his reason for giving them those names. "The name of the one was Gershom; for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land: and the name of the other was Eliezer; for the God of my fathers, said he, was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh." Is this beneath the dignity of history, of sacred history? No, it is the most honourable province of history, to exhibit the honest unsophisticated feelings of nature, the genuine workings of the human heart, the real though humbler scenes of human life. What signifies to us the meeting of two old men three thousand three hundred years ago? Much every way. One of them is a Moses, and that Moses is describing his own sentiments, unveiling his own heart. He can serve as an instructor and an example to none, in respect to the prophetic dignity, as the bearer of the potent rod, as the man whose face shone, by forty days intimate communion with God. He can instruct but a few, by his wisdom and sagacity as a prince and a law-giver. But as a son, a husband and a father, he is a pattern to myriads, and shall continue to teach to the end of the world.

How pleasant it is to find this great man the same in retirement and privacy that he is upon the great theatre; and delineating a battle, a triumph, and a family meeting, with the same simplicity and godly sincerity! Public men have too often two different characters. Plausible and specious, humble, modest and insinuating before the world, they are self-willed and tyrannical, confident, assuming and brutal in private; they often fawn where they fear, and domineer where they have power. Not so the meek and gentle prophet and judge of Israel. He waits not in state till

his relations are admitted to pay their homage. He reckons it nothing derogatory to his high dignity to go forth to pay the respect due to age! and to humble the son, however high in place, at the feet of the parent. "And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent." Were it after the separation of but a day, friends have a thousand questions to ask, a thousand little incidents to relate; about their health, their entertainment, their dangers, their deliverances; about the observations which they have made, the projects they may have formed. What must it then have been for two such friends, for such a father and son, after a separation of many months, during which, events of such high moment to both had taken place, to meet together again in health and comfort, to communicate mutually the full soul, to retire into the tent, to shut out the world, and give vent to the overflowings of tenderness and affection.

And with what a subject of conversation are they furnished; "And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh, and to the Egyptians, for Israel's sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the Lord delivered them." The most trifling incidents which befall a brother, a friend, a child, are interesting and important. What must then have been the emotions of Jethro to hear the wonders of Egypt; to learn the great things of God, astonishing in themselves, and acquiring an additional weight, creating a new interest, from the person who related them, and who was himself so deeply concerned in the event?

But the good man is elevated, as he wondering listens to the wonderful tale, above all personal and selfish regards, above the partiality of private friendship, above the tenderness of natural affection. His heart dilates at the thought of a whole nation delivered, of

a tyrant trampled in the dust, of the power, wisdom and mercy of God magnified. “ And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel; whom he had delivered out of the hands of the Egyptians. And Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods; for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them.”

This friendly interview issues in a solemn religious service, in which Aaron and all the elders of Israel are called to assist. What a blessed influence has true religion, in conciliating kindness and confirming friendship! When men cordially agree in the same glorious object of worship, the little peculiarities of form will not obstruct the mutual attraction of brotherly love. Prejudice will droop and die, and charity will draw a veil over its neighbour's singularities and imperfections. Happy the family whose union is cemented by piety; the family whose happiness and peace are built upon the love of God; whose employments, communications and pursuits are improved and sanctified by prayer!

Due attention having been paid to the calls of hospitality, the dictates of private friendship, and the demands of filial duty, Moses reverts next day betimes to the discharge of the duties of his public station. The time, the talents of the minister of God, are not his own, they belong to mankind. Superficial observers, who consider but the eminence of the place which a magistrate fills, the robe which he wears, the respect with which he is attended, look up to him with envy, and call him blessed. They think not of the thousand sacrifices which he is constrained to make of his ease, of his inclination, of his health, of his natural propensities, of his private attachments. They talk of the honours and emoluments of his office, but they over-

look his anxious days, his painful toils, his sleepless nights, the causeless hatred which he incurs, the unprovoked insults which he must bear, and must not resent, the surrender which he must make of solid and substantial felicity, and the exchange of real and certain tranquillity, for uncertain usefulness or precarious reputation. Who would not be Moses, to sit on high and judge the people? But who would be Moses to have the people stand by him for judgment, "from the morning to the evening!"

The obscure part of mankind are little sensible what they owe to Providence for their obscurity. They can go out and come in unnoticed. They can go to rest when they will, and continue it as long as they please. They have no vigilant, jealous, envious eye over them. They are free from the dreadful conflict of inclination and duty, of interest and conscience, of reverence for God and respect for man. They can enjoy their families and friends. What they have, however little, they can call their own. What, compared to these, and such advantages as these, is the ermine cloak, the ivory sceptre, the gem-encircled crown? Rejoice, O man, that the world knows thee not, cares not for thee, condescends not to trouble thy repose. Creep thy way silently, I beseech thee, to heaven; unafraid of being overlooked, neglected and forgotten in the multitude of the redeemed, who there live, and reign, and "rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Observe how even a Moses may err in an excess of zeal, through ignorance, inexperience or inattention. Desirous of doing good by administering justice impartially, he cares not what trouble and labour it may cost himself. The service of fear or of necessity is slow, reluctant, partial and imperfect; the labour of love is cheerful, active and persevering. Moses is in the way of his duty early and late. If the public be served faithfully, if equity be dispensed, if God be glorified, he is willing to spend and to be spent in such a cause.

And Moses said unto his father-in-law, because "the people come up unto me to inquire of God: when they have a matter, they come unto me, and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws," Ver. 15, 16.

We have seen Jethro, in the character of a pious man, an affectionate neighbour, and a kind relation. We see him now blending with these excellent qualities the character of an able statesman and sagacious politician. There is no man so wise as not to need instruction, and none so simple as to be incapable of sometimes giving advice. Jethro plainly perceived, that the course of life which his son-in-law was pursuing must soon prove fatal to him. That, by attempting what was beyond his strength to bear or perform, he was in the way of quickly rendering himself unable to do any thing at all. He therefore proposes a subdivision of the toil, by the appointment of proper men to the office of judge, who might try and determine the causes of less importance, and apply to Moses, and to God through him, only in matters of high moment, and as the last resort. Thus Moses would be greatly relieved, many good men would be trained up to the useful, honourable and important employment of judging between his brethren, and the people meanwhile sustain no damage.

The qualities which he points out as requisite to constitute this character, show how carefully he had considered the subject, and how well fitted he was to advise in a matter of this kind. Let those who have the appointment of judges study well what he says, and act accordingly. "Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness: and place *such* over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens," Ver. 21.

The first requisite in a judge, according to Jethro, is *ability*. He must be a man of sense, penetration and discernment. Because, with the best intentions, a stu-

pid, weak or dissipated man, will be apt to err in judgment, either because he is unable to comprehend the cause, or will not employ the necessary time and pains to understand it.

But what are the greatest and most shining abilities, destitute of a principle of conscience? They are but a mischievous weapon in the hands of a bad man. A judge, therefore, ought to be a man that *fears God*. A man, not only restrained by respect to the world, or actuated by regard to reputation: these are found feeble and inefficacious in the hour of temptation; these are fluctuating and unsteady, as the opinions, passions and interests of men; but the fear of the Lord is a perpetual unchanging motive and restraint, the same in darkness as in the light, the same in secret as before the eyes of the whole world.

This principle is closely connected with, and indeed it naturally produces a third quality, of primary importance in this character. A judge must be a *man of truth*. A sacred observer of truth, in what he says himself; a diligent promoter of truth, and an impartial avenger of falsehood and injustice in others. Even a regard to some of the principles of religion, unconnected with the love of truth and justice, which are of the number of those principles, might be apt to mislead a man. Compassion, for example, might dispose a judge to favour the poor man, though he has the worst cause. The all-wise God, therefore, thought it necessary to throw in a special caution to this purpose, lest a principle, amiable and excellent in itself, should be perverted into a source of injustice, and has enjoined, by a positive statute, “Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause,” Exod. xxiii. 3.—that the cause, not the person or condition of the man, should be considered by him who sits in judgment.

Jethro finally lays it down as essential to the character of a judge, that he be a man who *hates covetousness*. In which there is a strong insinuation, that where

the love of money predominates, the exercise of all other necessary and suitable qualities are likely to be obstructed or perverted; ability under such influence rendered only more dangerous and hurtful; the fear of God lulled asleep; the heart hardened; the conscience, by the strong opiate of gold, reduced to a state of insensibility, and truth and justice hoodwinked on the tribunal.

The history of our own country affords a melancholy example of the truth of this observation, in the conduct of that "greatest, wisest, meanest of mankind," Sir Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, and Lord High Chancellor of England, in the reign of James I. who with a soul that comprehended, filled, extended and enlarged the circle of science; a genius that penetrated through the whole vast system of nature, an imagination that transcended the flaming boundaries of the world, and a heart devoted to the love of God and mankind—basely received the wages of unrighteousness, accepted a bribe to pervert justice, was accused and convicted of corruption in the execution of his high and important trust, acknowledged his own shame, and was deservedly driven, with disgrace to himself, and with the indignation, shame and pity of a mortified and astonished world, from an honourable station which he filled so unworthily.

But alas, after all, when we read of the appointment of judges and generals and of their requisite qualities, of what does it remind us but that men are selfish, covetous, litigious and violent: tenacious of their own, and ready to encroach upon others? Wherefore is law? Wherefore are there tribunals? They are for "the lawless and disobedient." Make men just, gentle, kindly affectioned; make them christians indeed, and then war is at an end; the courts are shut up; then there would be no need of a judge, because there would be no offender.

The advice which was wisely and kindly given, was

graciously and candidly received. A proud and self-sufficient spirit would have rejected the counsel, however salutary, because tendered by a stranger. But, true wisdom only considers whether the hint be useful, practicable and necessary, without regarding from what quarter it comes. And such was the wisdom of Moses, and he was prepared for converse with God, who had learned deference and respect for the opinions of men. And thus the very first rudiments of the Jewish constitution, were suggested by the observation and experience of a stranger and a Midianite. And the great Jehovah disdained not to permit his prophet to be taught, and his people to be governed, by the wisdom and intelligence of a good man, though he was not of the commonwealth of Israel. If men were capable of learning to be wise and good, He who is wisdom and goodness itself would vouchsafe to teach them, not by precept only, but by example also. As Jethro suggested so it was done. Moses was eased of a burthen intolerable, the course of justice was not stopped, God was glorified, and the world edified.

You must have observed, that I have once and again held out to your expectation a subject of discourse, from which I have once and a second time shrunk back. It is still before me, and I feel myself as reluctant as ever to proceed. Who is not ready to sink under the awful terrors of the dispensation of the law from Sinai? "Who is sufficient for such things?" But I must venture to go on, and endeavour to carry you with me to the foot of that tremendous mountain. And I flatter myself you have not been altogether disappointed or injured in being stopped a little in your progress. With recruited strength and spirits, we shall attempt to advance on our way. But we shall first from this eminence survey the ground over which we have travelled. Eminence, did I say? No. Let us join the innocent, cheerful society in the tent of Moses, and learn to cultivate the endearing charities of private life; and, having con-

sidered it well, let us retire, making such reflections as these—

That it is not fortitude, but folly, unnecessarily to expose ourselves, or those whom we love, to hardships and danger. “If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel,” 1 Tim. v. 8. It is our care, not our labour and reflection, which we are encouraged to cast upon God.

That it argues a deficiency in some moral principle or another, when persons whom nature, and the obligations of society have united, discover an inclination to live asunder. Wisdom or necessity may impose a temporary separation: but well disposed minds ever look to, and eagerly lay hold of the means and the season of restoration and union.

That regard to public utility, exalts and improves private friendship.

That to promote the glory of God, his own virtue, and the good of his fellow-creatures, is the great and constant aim of every good man.

That as none is too wise to learn, it is a proof of affection to communicate useful hints; and a high proof of wisdom to take and use them, from whatever quarter they come. There is one Being only who is not to be instructed. “How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out; for who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?” Rom. xi. 33, 34.

And finally that, though we cannot successfully imitate eminent men in every particular of conduct, or in the display of talents which may be denied to ourselves, we are not thereby precluded from the exercise of the inferior talents which we possess, and from a virtuous emulation where it is possible for us to succeed. Let me strive to be a Moses in some things, though I be conscious I must fall inconceivably behind him in most. Amen.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE XVII.

And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount; and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish. And let the priests also, which come near to the Lord, sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them.—EXODUS xix. 16—22.

IN man, as he came perfect from the hands of his Creator, the immortal principle, the “breath of life,” “the living soul” exercised its just dominion over the earthly and sensual part of his nature. In man, degraded by sin, we behold the grosser domin-

eering over the purer, the heavenly subjected to the terrestrial, the soul, a slave to the senses. When our nature through grace shall be restored, the soul shall resume its empire; the body itself shall become spiritual, shall shake off the power of gravitation, and “ascend to meet the Lord in the air,” “being fashioned like unto Christ’s glorious body.”

The dispensations of Heaven are suited to the condition of man. “God knows our frame, and remembereth that we are dust.” He makes sense his road to the mind; he seizes the conscience, and melts the heart, by speaking to the eyes and the ears. And when we consider how easily, and through how many different channels he can force his way to the inmost recesses of the man, who but must shudder at the thought of meeting the Father of spirits, ourselves disembodied spirits; at the thought of dropping the clay tabernacle in its native dust, and of becoming all eye to see God as he is, all ear to hear his voice, all soul to perceive and comprehend him! If God, encouraging and amiable in purifying and directing fire in the cloudy pillar, and in harmless, unconsuming fire in the bush at Horeb, be awful; if dreadful at Sinai, coming in flashing, dazzling, threatening fire to promulgate his law; what must he be “coming in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ?” If the sound of that trumpet, which proclaimed the approach of God to Israel, was ready to kill the living with fear, what must be the trumpet which shall awake the dead? Whatever majesty and solemnity may appear in the giving of the law, every one shall in a little while behold it infinitely exceeded in the consummation of the gospel.

God has hitherto declared his divine perfections by the effects which they produced. The plagues of Egypt awfully manifested his power and justice. The daily showers of manna, and water flowing from the

rock, bespeak his power and goodness. But he now opens his mouth, to proclaim in the ears of men, his name, his nature and his will. Let us, with Israel, at a trembling distance contemplate this great sight, and listen with reverence to the Almighty uttering his voice.

The posterity of Abraham, according to the promise, is now become a great nation. But what are multitudes without government, and what government is a blessing without law? Happiness consist not in having such and such possessions, but in being fitted to enjoy what we have. The constitution of other states is the work of time, is the result of experience, arrives at maturity by degrees. Laws and restrictions, encouragements and restraints are suggested by events. But when the great Jehovah condescends to become a legislator, the utmost extent of possibility lying open to his view, provision is made from the beginning for every case that can happen. The rule of his government is laid down at once ; and the civil and religious constitution of that nation over which he chose to preside, is established by a wisdom which cannot err.

It was not unpleasant, as we were contemplating the scene exhibited in the preceding chapter, to listen to a wise and good man giving advice with respect to the administration of public justice. But we now tread upon holy ground; and we listen, not to a man like ourselves, but to the only wise God. The whole taken together unfolds an unparalleled display of mercy and majesty, of goodness and grandeur.

Forty-seven days have now elapsed, since that “night much to be remembered,” when the destroying angel walked through the midst of Egypt, and slew all the first-born. And how many singular and interesting events have taken place in that short period? The Red Sea has been divided; the bitter waters of Marah sweetened; bread from Heaven rained down; a living stream extracted from a flinty rock in Horeb; Amalek discomfited! Whether of the two shall

we most admire, the greatness of the works which God performs, or the facility with which he brings them to pass? What a high value are we taught to put upon time, when we see to what valuable purposes, through the blessing and assistance of Heaven, a little time may be made subservient.

Three days more are employed in making solemn preparation for this celestial visitation; so that the law was delivered exactly on the fiftieth day after the celebration of the feast of passover: and in commemoration of it, the Jewish feast of Pentecost was ever after observed and rendered illustrious in the annals of the christian church, by a new dispensation, not of terror, but of grace: the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles of our Lord, in the miraculous gift of tongues. Even the minute circumstances of times and places, may have a significancy and an importance of which we have at present no apprehension. And I am fully persuaded, when God shall be pleased to vouchsafe us a clearer light and fresh discoveries of his will, numberless instances of coincidence and resemblance between the legal and evangelical dispensations shall rush upon us, of which we can now form no conception. Why God has appointed the seventh day to be the weekly sabbath; why the law was proclaimed from Mount Sinai just after seven times seven days had elapsed from the going out of Egypt; why, in the possession of Canaan, the land was to be permitted to rest every seventh year; why the general release, or year of jubilee, was to be statedly observed, after a constant revolution of seven times seven years; and why the Holy Ghost was given "when the day of Pentecost was fully come," or after seven times seven days from the day that "Christ our passover was sacrificed for us?" These are questions which we pretend not to resolve. But certain it is these things have a meaning: "I know it not now, but I shall know it hereafter."

Sinai, the scene of this splendid exhibition, is the

highest eminence of a vast ridge of mountains, which run from east to west through Arabia Petræa, as you go from the north-east coast of the Red Sea to Palestine. The adjoining eminence is called Horeb, and is rendered illustrious by the miracle of the water issuing from the rock. And from their propinquity, and their forming part of the same chain of mountains, they are often put the one for the other; and the adjacent desert country is called, indifferently, the wilderness of Horeb, or the wilderness of Sinai.

Moses was first called up into the mount alone, and thence sent back to the people with repeated messages full of tenderness and love. Preparation was made for the tremendous appearance of the glory of the Lord, by the most gracious and reiterated assurances of favour and protection. This is the endearing language which the great God condescends to employ on the occasion; “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle’s wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.” The beautiful image of the eagle, and her young ones, is happy beyond expression, and evidently proceeds from Him from whose view no part of the world of nature lies concealed. The natural history of that king of the feathered race, were this the time and the place to introduce it, would be the best commentary on the passage. But we may at least stop to illustrate, by comparing it with the same image, delineated by the masterly hand, with still greater strength of colouring, and greater force and variety of expression. “For the Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the

apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock," Deut. xxxii. 9, &c. The sagacity and vigilance of the eagle in providing the means of support and safety for her callow brood, her strength and fierceness in defending them, her tender sympathy with their weakness, her anxiety to hasten on their maturity and capacity to provide for themselves, the pains which she takes to instruct them to fly—as they are fully justified by facts, so they are conveyed to us in language the most simple, plain and elegant; and raise us to the contemplation of an object, of all others the sublimest, sweetest, most interesting, and most composing to the soul. They represent to us, the all-comprehending view of eternal Providence, the never-sleeping eye of the Watchman of Israel, the unassailable protection of the heavenly Guardian, the more than maternal care, diligence and zeal which Jehovah continually exercises over them that are his. "Happy is that people that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord," Psal. cxliv. 15.

As friendship between God and Abraham, the father and founder of that great nation, commenced, and was confirmed in the solemn ratification of a covenant, performed according to the rites of God's own appointing; so the political existence and importance of that nation were directed to take their rise in the CUTTING or DIVIDING a covenant, with similar solemnities. And this was the tenor, these were the conditions of it. On the part of Israel, in one word, obedience to the voice of God; submission in all things to the will of their best friend, and kindest benefactor, who could have nothing in view but their happiness. On the

part of God, the promise of a profusion of blessings temporal, spiritual and everlasting; a rank among the nations, which should render them the envy and wonder of the world; an establishment, which length of time should not impair; a succession of prophets, of priests and of princes, which was to issue in the eternal priesthood and unlimited sovereignty of one, whose government was to be an universal and everlasting blessing to them and to mankind. “Ye shall be a peculiar treasure, unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine.” *Segulah*, “a peculiar treasure” something exceedingly prized and sedulously preserved, a gem of peculiar lustre and value, which an affluent and powerful prince culls out from among many, takes under his own particular charge, and will not entrust to the care of another.

Moses takes up this striking idea again in that beautiful song of praise, in which, at the close of life, he recapitulates the wonderful ways of Providence to that chosen family: “The Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance,” Deut. xxxii. 9. The promise which follows in the sixth verse, is wonderfully calculated to inspire ideas of dignity and importance; “Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” They had just left a country where the priesthood was held in high estimation; where the persons of those who bore that sacred character were inviolable, and their property exempted from the imposts which were laid upon that of other subjects. But the peculiar respect paid to this order of men, and the immunities which they enjoyed, served only to expose more glaringly the contrast, the degradation and distress of the great body of the people. Whereas here was a whole nation destined of Heaven to equal honours; not a king and subjects, but a commonwealth of kings; not one ministering at the altar in the name of thousands, one admitted within the veil, and myriads removed to an humbling, mortifying

fyng distance; but a kingdom of priests, an holy nation, majesty and sanctity in one.

These are the words which Moses is commanded to rehearse in the ears of all the people. Having descended from the mount, he collects them accordingly by their *elders*; the men first in age, first in wisdom, first in dignity and authority; and delivers to them the high message which he had in charge. Impressed at once with the power and grace of their heavenly King, they as one man reply, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." Which answer Moses again reports to his dread Employer. Thus, in the very preparatives for the publication of the law, the mediation of the gospel was clearly taught and inculcated; and thus throughout we perceive that guilty creatures can have no safe nor comfortable access to a holy God, but by means of "a days-man to lay his hands upon both;" and thus, the very minister of a fiery law exhibited a type of that great High-Priest, at once "merciful and faithful;" "faithful in the things pertaining to God;" "merciful, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

Moses is upon this informed, that God intended on the third day from that time to manifest himself to all the people as the Leader and Ruler of that vast army, and as the Employer and Patron of Moses his prophet, in a manner that should leave no room to doubt in whose name he spake, and by what authority he acted: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the Lord." "I come to thee in a thick cloud." God already resided among Israel, and presided over them in a pillar of fire and a cloud. But whatever be the medium of communication between the Deity and his creatures, it is capable of being increased and improved beyond imagination. There is a darkness grosser, and a cloud

thicker and more awfully impregnated, than any of which we have had experience. There is a voice louder, and a glory brighter than any which we have heard or seen. Who can declare, who can conceive the utmost extent of the power of the Almighty? There is a splendour infinitely superior to that of "the sun shining in his strength." There may be an angel excelling in might; "Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God." Know we ever so much, there is a field of discovery before us infinite as the immensity of JEHOVAH, to employ a duration of inquiry endless as his eternity.

A command is now issued to the people to employ themselves that day and the next in solemn preparation for this august visit. They are directed as an external mark of respect to the most holy God, as a token of obedience, and as an indication of inward purity, to wash their clothes, to abstain from whatever might defile the body or the mind, and even to deny themselves such innocent and lawful gratifications as might have a tendency to disturb their attention and distract their thoughts. When God came to give the law, he came after solemn warning, he gave evident signs of his approach, he declared to a moment when he was to be heard and seen in his majesty. But, when he shall come to execute the law, we are informed that he shall take the world by surprise, that men may be always ready. "Behold I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee," Rev. iii. 3. "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come," Matt. xxiv. 42. "Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh," Matt. xxiv. 44.

When but a friend or neighbour is expected to visit us, decency requires that our persons, our houses, or entertainment, be rendered as inoffensive and as acceptable as we can make them. The anxiety which men feel, and the pains which they take to receive and

entertain their superiors, is too well known to need any remark. It is only when the King of kings, and the Lord of lords announces his approach, that men are incurious, unceremonious, careless and indifferent.

The great Jehovah was to manifest himself first to the eye. "Be ready against the third day; for the third day the Lord will come down, in the sight of all the people, upon mount Sinai." All is hitherto attractive and encouraging. The face of God is clothed with smiles. He comes "to dwell with men upon earth." But the grace and condescension of God, while they invite to the communications of friendship, forbid the boldness and freedom of familiarity. While he makes himself known as a Father, a Protector, a Guide, he permits us not to forget that he is at the same time "a great God, and a great King." Therefore a strict injunction is given in the twelfth and thirteenth verses, "And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall surely be put to death. There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, ye shall come up to the mount." This last expression, "When the trumpet soundeth long, ye shall come up to the mount," is evidently a caution and threatening, not an invitation; and seems to import, "Let him who dares presume to approach nearer; let him come up into the mount, if he will." At the sound of that tremendous trumpet, they were ready to sink into the earth with terror instead of desiring or attempting a nearer intercourse with the great and terrible God, who hath put all nature into consternation.

As they were commanded, so they did. All impurity is carefully removed; and they see, in solemn silence and earnest expectation, in hope mingled with

fear, the gradual approach of this all-important, this eventful day.

At length, in all its pomp and importance, the third day arrives. Every creature, every element feels and gives witness to the appearance of its God. Heaven and earth, angels and men, the water and the land, air and fire, announce the presence of their great Creator and Ruler. I tremble as I read. What must it have been to see and hear? "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled." Lo, the hoarse thunder is lost in the louder sound of the trumpet; and that awful sound, in its turn sinks into silence, before the all-penetrating, all-commanding accents of the voice of God himself. The thick darkness of a cloud, impregnated with the terrors of divine justice, threatens one moment to extinguish for ever hope and joy; and that darkness the next moment is dispelled by the more terrible flashes of celestial fire. How poor the state of an earthly prince compared to this! "God maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flame of fire." What heart is not melted in the midst of this wild uproar? There is not an object of astonishment which we are acquainted with, but what enters into this description. Thunder, lightning, blackness of darkness, tempest, earthquake, the trumpet of God; and all these are but the coverings of terror, the harbingers of majesty and might. Behold, God is in the thunder, in the lightning, in the tempest, in the earthquake! they are mere instruments to do his pleasure.

But we are directed to one object perfectly placid and composed in the midst of tumult and confusion: "even when the voice of the trumpet sounded long and waxed exceeding loud," Moses possessed his soul in patience. "Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice." It is guilt that gives force to fire, that

lends fury to the stormy wind, that shakes the earth by first shaking the soul. Faith in God controls the elements, and soothes the soul to rest in communion with God, as the child falls asleep in the fond maternal bosom.

Moses comes up at the command of Him who is King and Lord of nature, and therefore he has nothing to fear. The three children fall down bound in the midst of the burning fiery furnace, but the flames have no power to kindle upon them; they consume only the cords with which they are bound; they themselves walk at liberty through the midst of the fire: they rest as on a bed of roses, for behold another is in company with them, and "the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Daniel sleeps secure in the den among lions, more composedly than Darius in his palace, surrounded by his officers and guards; he sleeps calmly, as a father in the midst of his children. He who fears God has nothing else to fear.

But what new doctrine is to be ushered in under all this formidable apparatus? What law, unknown, unheard of before, is to be introduced and enforced by ceremonies so dreadfully august and solemn? Just that which was from the beginning, that which the finger of God more silently and curiously interwove with the very texture and frame of the human soul. The voice of God says, from the heights of Sinai, none other things than those which conscience speaks to every man, from the deep recesses of his own breast. It is this that gives weight to both the law and the gospel. They have their counterpart in the nature and condition of man. They are of God, who knows what is in man and what is good for man.

But can He whose "presence fills heaven and earth," change his place? Can God be said to ascend, or descend? The devout eye sees him in every creature, in every place, in every event. The pious soul feels and acknowledges him incessantly. But to rouse stu-

pidity, to reprove carelessness, to convince infidelity, God must assume state, clothe himself with thunder, involve the top of Sinia in clouds, and shake its foundation. As in the composure of Moses we behold the confidence of divine friendship, and the security arising from union with God, so in the caution which is given in the twenty-first verse, "Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish," we see the danger of unlicensed curiosity, of presumptuous boldness. Fire and darkness equally repel and intimidate, equally compose and encourage. All the dealings of God with man, are "line upon line, and precept upon precept."

The similitude of the legal and evangelical dispensations, and their difference, would necessarily occupy a much larger portion of your time and attention than now remains. It were better, therefore, to bring them together in one discourse calculated for the purpose.

I conclude the present Lecture with simply reading two or three short passages of scripture, closely connected with and serving to illustrate our subject; written at two very different periods, and in two very different states of the church. The first is in the history of Elijah, the great restorer of the law, near six hundred years afterward. "And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, unto Horeb, the mount of God. And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him; and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great

and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only am left; and they seek my life, to take it away," 1 Kings, xix. 8, &c. The second is the winding up of that wonderful comparison and contrast of the law and the gospel, which constitute the great body of the epistle to the Hebrews, and which the apostle sums up in these remarkable words, sixty-four years after the advent of Jesus Christ. "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: for they could not endure that which was commanded. And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart. And so terrible was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake. But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things

than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 18, &c.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE XVIII.

According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee; only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses.—JOSHUA i. 17.

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.—JOHN i. 17.

IN forming estimates of greatness, it is natural for men to consult their senses, not their reason. With the idea of royal majesty we connect those of a chair of state, a numerous and splendid retinue, an ermine robe, a sceptre and a crown. But wisdom and goodness are the qualities which confer real dignity, and command just homage and respect. Our preconceptions of earthly magnificence much exceed the truth, and knowledge speedily levels the fabric which imagination had raised. But the wonders of nature, the mighty works of God, grow upon us as we contemplate them. No intimacy of acquaintance reduces their magnitude or tarnishes their lustre. And if the very frame of nature, the vastness, the variety, the harmony and the splendor of the visible creation, be calculated to fill us with astonishment and delight, how must the plan of Providence, the work of redemption, the great mystery of godliness, excel in glory!

In the discoveries which it has pleased God, at sun-

dry times and in divers manners to make of himself to mankind, he has at one time addressed himself directly to the understanding; at another, made his way to the heart and conscience through the channel of sense. The law was given in every circumstance of external pomp; it was accompanied with every thing that could dazzle the eye, fill the ear, and rouse the imagination. The kingdom of God, in the gospel of his "Son, came not with observation." The great Author of the dispensation of grace, according as it was predicted concerning him, "did not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets." He had, in the eyes of an undiscerning world, "no form nor comeliness, no beauty why he should be desired." And therefore "he was despised and rejected of men." But we are taught to think very differently of his second appearance. "He shall come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory:" "In his Father's glory, and all his holy angels:" "With the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God."

The manner of delivering the law corresponded with its nature. It was clothed with thunder. It was surrounded with the blackness of darkness. It emitted flaming fire. It denounced death. The spirit of the gospel, in like manner, breathed in the mode of its publication. The doctrine of peace and reconciliation was delivered to men, in the tenderest accents of human friendship. And temporal mercies and deliverances prepared the way for "spiritual and heavenly blessings in Christ Jesus."

We are now to bring these two dispensations together, and to compare the one with the other, in order that we may discover and admire that uniformity of design which they jointly aim at promoting, the mutual lustre which they shed upon, and the mutual aid which they lend to each other.

By "the law" we understand the whole of that scheme of the divine Providence which related to the

posterity of Abraham; the promises which were made to them, the ordinances prescribed, the character which they bear, the events which befel them, from the day in which that patriarch left his kindred and country, till the day when the whole was swallowed up and lost in the person, doctrines, ordinances, life, sufferings and death of Him, who was held up from the beginning as the great, leading, commanding object in the eternal eye; the accomplishment of the promises, the substance of the types and shadows, the "end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Moses and Christ frequently speak of their mutual relation and resemblance. "I will raise them up," says God by Moses, "a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him," Deut. xviii. 18, 19. "Search the scriptures," says Christ, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" John v. 39, &c.

The persons, characters and offices of the two legislators, therefore, naturally fall to be first considered, in tracing the resemblance of the two covenants which were established with mankind through their mediation.

Of the birth of Moses, and salvation to Israel by him, there seems to have been a general expectation in his own nation, and an apprehension of such an event as general in the minds of the Egyptians. Hence the bloody decree of Pharaoh to destroy from the womb all the male children of the Hebrews; and hence, on the other hand, that eagerness to save a child, who, from the moment of its birth, exhibited

unequivocal signs of his future greatness and usefulness. When Christ came into the world, multitudes were looking for the "Consolation of Israel." The prophecies concerning the promises of the Messiah, were evidently hastening to fulfil themselves. The Jews expected their king: Herod dreaded a rival. The person of the promised Saviour was pointed out by signs in heaven and signs on earth, which it was impossible to misunderstand. An extraordinary star describes an unknown path through the air to the place of his birth. A multitude of the heavenly host proclaim the joyful event to the shepherds. It was revealed unto Simeon by the Holy Ghost, "that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ," Luke ii. 26. Conducted of the Spirit he came into the temple at the moment when Christ was presented there, according to the law. He recognizes the promised of the Lord, and closes his eyes in peace. Anna the prophetess, instructed by the same Spirit, gives a similar testimony, and speaks of "the holy child to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem," Luke ii. 38.

The circumstances of extreme danger which attended the birth of Moses and of Christ, and the wonderful means of their preservation and deliverance, constitute a striking mark of resemblance between them. Behold the long-looked for deliverer of the Jewish church and nation, ready to perish by the hand of Pharaoh: and the great King and Head of the christian world threatened by the murdering dagger of the Tetrarch of Galilee; while the earth was watered with the blood of their infant brethren. Moses is saved from destruction by the daughter of the tyrant who sought his life; he finds an asylum and a school in the house which he was destined to plague and to humble. And Jesus of Nazareth finds shelter in Egypt from the fury and jealousy of Herod.

The personal beauty and accomplishments of the

Israelitish law-giver were probably intended to typify in an inferior degree, the personal glory and excellency of Him, concerning whom the prophet thus writes, "Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever," Psal. xlv. 2.

The wretched state of Israel when Moses was born, and of the world when Christ came to save it, are a melancholy and affecting counterpart to each other. The former subjected to the arbitrary authority of a sanguinary tyrant; the latter, in dreadful captivity to the prince of the power of the air, "that murderer from the beginning;" "that spirit which ruleth in the children of disobedience."

Their mental qualities present a lovely and an instructive similitude. "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth," Numb. xii. 3. "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls," Matt. xi. 29. Compassion for his afflicted brethren, early discovered the temper, and marked the character of Moses, the man of God. Sympathy with the miserable, and that sympathy effecting seasonable relief for them, marked the paths of the Son of God through a world of wretchedness. "I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue now with me three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint by the way," xv. 32. "When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd," ix. 36. Over the grave of Lazarus "Jesus wept." "When he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes," Luke xix. 41, 42.

The offices which Moses and Christ were called of

Providence to execute, present us with points of likeness which it is impossible not to see, and equally impossible to mistake. "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face; in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all that great terror, which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel," Deut. xxxiv. 10, &c. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," John i. 18. Moses was king in Jeshurun, and conducted the thousands of Israel through many difficulties and dangers to their destined habitation: Jesus, God's "anointed King over his holy hill of Zion," brings his "many" spiritual "sons unto glory."

To constitute one deliverer for Israel, Moses and Aaron must unite their talents, must combine their force, must conjoin their offices: the prophet must co-operate with the priest; two distinct persons carry on one design; but, in the Saviour of the world, all talents, all virtues, all offices meet and centre: the prophetic inspiration of Moses, Aaron's pleasantness and grace of speech; the regal dignity of the one, the sacerdotal purity of the other. In order to put Israel in possession of the promised land, Joshua must succeed to Moses, and happily finish what his master has so successfully begun. But the great Captain of salvation needs no coadjutor, can have no successor: "He gives grace and glory." He leads his redeemed through the wilderness, introduces them into Canaan, maintains them in quiet and everlasting possession.

Other lines of resemblance will appear as we prosecute the history, and shall not therefore be anticipated.

But we must not dismiss the subject without pointing out wherein the likeness fails, and how much the type falls short of the object which it represents.

The wonders performed by Moses in Egypt were wrought by a power delegated to, and conferred upon him for the purpose. The miracles of Christ were produced by a power original and inherent. Moses, though the meekest of all men, was betrayed into rashness, lost temper, and “spake unadvisedly with his lips.” But in Jesus behold a spirit which was never ruffled, a tongue in which guile was never found; lips that never offended; a mind which no insult could disturb, no unkindness provoke; nor even the horrid pangs of an unmerited death rouse to resentment. “Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a Son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of hope firm unto the end,” Heb. iii. 1, &c.

“Moses died and was buried; Jesus died and was buried, and rose again.” Moses received the law; Christ gave it. Moses and Elias attend the Saviour on mount Tabor, as his ministering servants; Jesus receives their attendance and homage, as their Lord.

Having spoken of the resemblance between the authors of the two dispensations, we proceed, as was proposed, to speak in the same view of the two dispensations themselves.

And first, They rest on one and the same authority, are dictated by the same unerring wisdom, and are directed to the same great and glorious end. Indeed, one of the great proofs that both are of God is the conformity of both to the nature and condition of man,

The precepts of the law are not novel constitutions, which had no existence till the days of Moses; neither are the consolations of the gospel new discoveries of grace, unheard of till the four thousandth year of the world. Sinai thundered and lightened in Adam's conscience the moment he tasted the forbidden tree, and drove him to seek refuge "from the presence of the Lord God amidst the trees of the garden." The terrors of the law raged in Cain's guilty breast, long before there was any record written on brass or stone. And the promises of pardon and salvation are coeval with the conviction of the first offender, and the denunciation of his punishment. The tongue which pronounced on man the doom of death, proclaims the glad tidings of life and recovery.

I know that the *law* is of God, for I have that within me which acknowledges and approves its rectitude and excellency; and even when it condemns me, I am constrained to call it "holy, just and good." I know that the *gospel* is of God, for I feel that within me which welcomes its approach, discerns its suitability, rejoices in its fullness, rests upon its truth. It is of God, for it descends to the level of my guilt and misery, corresponds with my hopes, suits my necessities.

Our blessed Lord took an early opportunity of explaining himself on this subject. An absurd idea prevailed, that the kingdom of the Messiah was to be a total subversion of the Mosaic dispensation. An absurdity into which some christians have inadvertently given, for want of making a plain and necessary distinction, between those particulars of the law which are in their own nature eternal and unchangeable, like the nature of that God who is its author; and those, which being typical and prophetical, ceased of course when the predicted event arrived, and the type, having fulfilled its design, was lost in the thing typified; and those, which being temporary and transitory, ceased

with the occasion of them. Of the first sort are the precepts of the decalogue, or the ten commandments; which under every constitution that effects such a being as man, must be immutable and everlasting. Of them it is that Christ said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, 'Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled," Matt. v. 17, 18. Of the second class are the laws of the daily sacrifice, the great annual feasts, the levitical priesthood, and the like. They pointed out Christ the Lord, they led to him, they were lost in him. And in the third rank we place the law of circumcision, the political economy of the Jewish nation, all that related to the possession of Canaan, and which ceased of course with the dissolution of their government, and the loss of their national importance. These observations being attended to and kept in mind, will prevent the confusion arising from the ambiguous acceptation of the word "law," as expressing the Old Testament dispensation.

The law, then, and the gospel, the two tables of stone delivered to Moses, and the "grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ," coincide, secondly, in this, that they both point out with equal clearness and force the necessity of a Saviour. Every word pronounced by the voice of God from Sinai, is in truth a sentence of condemnation. While it enjoins future obedience, it fixes past guilt. While it says, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath," it accuses of idolatry. While it recommends the observance of the sabbath, it charges home the violation of it; and so of the rest of the precepts of the decalogue.

The law, therefore, carried the gospel in its bosom as the new-changed moon exhibits a great body of ob-

scurity, embraced by a small semicircle of light; but which is to be irradiated by degrees, till the whole becomes one great globe of light and glory; and Moses performs the part of "a school-master to bring us to Christ."

To hear of a constitution by which I might have lived, after my life is forfeited, is only to embitter my misery. It is like hearing of a cordial after a man has swallowed poison. Now, it could never be the design of the gracious Law-giver to insult human misery, by holding out a system which could avail the guilty nothing. While, then, the divine justice lays down the law in all its strictness, purity and extent, saying, "I am the Lord who will by no means clear the guilty;" "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Gall. iii. 10—the goodness which condescends to give a law at all, the wisdom which explains it, the patience that forbears to punish its transgression, all plainly and distinctly proclaim the necessity and the existence of an atonement, and lead to "the bringing in of a better hope."

Thirdly, The spirit of both dispensations is a spirit of love. God enforces upon Israel obedience to the law from Sinai, by the consideration of his being the Lord, which "brought him out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage:" "who has borne them on eagle's wings, and brought them to himself." And "love" on the part of man "is the fulfilling of the law." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets," Matt. xxii. 37—40. The gospel, in like manner, has its source in love, the love of God; and its great aim and end is to produce love to God. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only be-

gotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. "And we love him because he first loved us." "The love of Christ constrained us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again," 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. And, "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another," John xiii. 35. "He that says he loves God, and hateth his brother, is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" 1 John iv. 20. And, when both shall have produced their full effect, "perfect love shall cast out fear," the voice of God shall be unaccompanied with thunder and lightning, cloud and tempest. The storm is in the mind of the guilty creature. The wrath of fire is not in God, but in fallen man; in "the carnal mind, which is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. viii. 7. When that is extinguished, all is at peace. The aim and labour of the gospel is not to reconcile God to man; but to reconcile men to God: for "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John iv. 16.

Fourthly, Both the legal and evangelical dispensations equally discover to us our distance from God. The one, by enumerating and declaring our offences; the other, by enumerating and declaring the tender mercies of our God. The law treats us as alienated friends, whom it is needful to convince, to reprove and humble. The gospel considers us as friends restored, no "longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God:" "once darkness, but now light in the Lord: once, afar off, but made nigh by the blood of Christ." The law shows us how far we have deviated from the path of duty

and happiness; the gospel conducts us back through our wanderings, unravels the intricacies and errors of our dark steps, and replaces us in our father's house. Moses informs us that we are wrong, "like sheep going astray;" Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life," and takes us under the care of "the shepherd and bishop of souls." Moses points out the dreadful depth into which we have fallen, the dreadful distance from heaven to hell; Christ reveals the glorious height to which we are raised, the glorious distance from hell to heaven. Moses tells me what I ought to be and to do; Christ makes me such as he would have me to be. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus," Eph. ii. 1, &c.

But the law was delivered to the world in a very different manner from the publication of the gospel; in fire that burned, in tempest that roared, in a cloud that darkened, in words that threatened. It awed men into distance; it inspired terror. But the gospel comes in light that consumes not, in glory that dazzles not, in language that threatens not. The law says, "Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall surely be put to death. There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it

shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount." "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish," Exod. xix. 12, &c. The gospel says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28. "He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 37. But to the impenitent and unbelieving, the gospels speaks the same terror which the law did from Sinai; nay, it wears a still more frowning aspect. "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile," Rom. ii. 8, 9. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him," Heb. ii. 3. "He that despised Moses's law died without mercy, under two or three witnessess: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?" x. 28, 29. And on the other hand, to them that believe, the law speaks in the mildest, gentlest language of the gospel; for "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," Rom. viii. 1. "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin," Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7. "And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments," xx. 6. I know not whether the whole bible contains an expression of goodness more singular and striking than those words

which issued from the mountain that burned with fire. Our fears are alarmed at the mention of the great and dreadful name—"The Lord God, a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children." But justice has its limits. It may be stretched out to the third or fourth generation of offenders. Yet the "Lord will not strive continually; neither will he keep his anger for ever." But grace knows no bounds. When mercy is to be extended, it looks forward and forward, from a third and a fourth, to thousands of generations of them that love God. In what promise of the New Testament is the love of God preached more sweetly than in this precept of the Old?

Both dispensations then have their mildness, and both their terror. Their mildness from the grace of the Creator; their terror from the guilt of the creature. And if the proclamation of the law were thus dreadful; if the alarm of judgment to come shake the foundation of the everlasting hills; if Sinai tremble, and the rocks melt before the Lord, coming as a Protector and a Friend, what must the sessions be, the great day of doom, the awful hour of execution, when the judge shall come "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Thess. i. 8. "When the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the element shall melt with fervent heat," 2 Pet. iii. 12. "Consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver," Psal. l. 22.

"Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum: We have such an high Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord hath pitched and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. But now hath he obtained a more

excellent ministry: by how much also he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts; I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away," Heb. viii. 1, &c. And all "this is of God, who hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious," 2 Cor. iii. 6, &c.

We are assembled this night, my brethren, the subjects of the law; the students of the gospel; the expectants of Christ's second appearance. "See then that ye resist not him that speaketh from heaven." Ye are happily set free from the law of ceremonies; happily subjected to the law of morality; and "not without law unto Christ." "Stand fast therefore in that liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free." Enjoy and improve what you have; affect not more than a wise Providence permits. Look forward to that day when you shall join an innumerable company

of angels, yourselves like the angels of God in heaven; when you shall associate with the spirits of just men made perfect, yourselves perfect as they are; when you shall add your voices to the celestial choir, in singing “the song of Moses and the Lamb;” when you shall see the face of God without dying, and hear his voice without quaking for fear. “Now unto Him that loves us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

END OF THE FIRST COURSE OF LECTURES.

SACRED BIOGRAPHY.

BY HENRY HUNTER, D. D.

SECOND COURSE OF LECTURES.

SACRED BIOGRAPHY.

LECTURE I.

Be not now therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.—
2 TIMOTHY i. 8, 9, 10.

EVERY dispensation of the divine Providence seems to be the basis and the preparation of a farther display of wisdom and goodness. The last discovered purpose of the Eternal Mind, is the continuation, the extension and the improvement of that which immediately preceded it; and the glory hitherto displayed in the ways and works of God, however excellent, is hastening to lose itself in “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” yet to be revealed. Periods of immeasurable, incomprehensible duration had flowed before this fair and majestic frame of nature was called into existence. For we read of a purpose of grace formed and given “before the world began,” and of “a kingdom prepared from the foundation of the

world;" of an election made, and of "eternal life promised, of God who cannot lie, *before* the foundation of the world." Who can tell what systems have preceded that which now exists? We know from scripture that one more glorious is to succeed it. "According to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," 2 Peter iii. 13. And who can tell what future systems may arise in endless progression? As well might the fluttering insect, which was born in the morning, and perishes at night, presume to dive into the ages beyond the flood, or with bold adventurous wing attempt to soar into the heaven of heavens, and declare the wonders of the world of spirits.

But though system may succeed system, though dispensations change, one thing is immutable, "the gracious purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." One great object was kept in view before the world began, is still kept in view through the whole extent of its duration, and is to be pursued through the endless ages of eternity. Do you need, christian, to be told what it is? The salvation of the world by Christ Jesus. It is a little thing to say, that Abraham saw his day afar off: that of him Moses wrote, Isaiah prophecied, David sung and Paul preached. "These things the angels desire to look into." On this exalted theme the everlasting counsels of peace revolved; to mature them, the powers of heaven and earth were shaken; and to bring them to their consummation, a new creation shall expand infinite space, and a succession of ages that are never, never to expire. Placed at whatever point in this immense sphere, our eyes are still attracted to the glorious Centre, from which all light and life and joy issue, and in whose light every inferior orb revolves and shines.

The epistle of the great apostle of the Gentiles from which I have taken the subject of this Discourse, is

addressed to Timothy, whom he styles his “dearly beloved son in the gospel,” and who had been ordained first bishop of the church of the Ephesians. Paul himself was at that time a prisoner at Rome, and totally uncertain respecting the issue of a cause which affected his life, before the imperial court. What mercy, what justice was to be expected from such a prince as Nero—the monster who could fire his country, shed the blood of his virtuous preceptor, and destroy his own mother? But we behold in the prisoner a spirit much exalted above the fear of a tyrant, a mind prepared for the worst that could befall him, and expressing anxiety, not about personal safety, but about the success of the gospel, and the steadfastness of a beloved disciple. He solemnly charges that disciple not to suffer himself to be one moment shaken in the faith, by the persecution to which the cause of Christ had exposed himself, or the ills which he might still be called to endure for the testimony of Jesus: and, to enforce his charge, he suggests a view of the gospel which eclipses all created glory, “stills the enemy and the avenger,” plucks from death his sting, and robs the grave of its boasted victory. He represents Timothy and himself as engaged in a cause, which the great God himself, before all worlds, regarded as of superior importance, and made peculiarly his own; which “at sundry times and in divers manners,” he disclosed; and which at length, “by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, he made manifest” to all men. Paul glories in the idea of being a worker together with God in this generous design; in his appointment to the office of “a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles,” in the great mystery of godliness; in displaying and dispensing to a guilty, perishing world, the unsearchable riches of Christ—who had “abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

—In tracing the history of the patriarchs who lived

both before and since the flood, from Adam to Abraham, and from Abraham to Moses, we have endeavoured to point out this unity of design, this steadiness of co-operation, this progress of discovery. By whatever name the typical person is designed, patriarch, prophet, high-priest, under the Old Testament dispensation: whatever be the designation of the ministering servant under the New, apostle, evangelist, pastor or elder, the office and the end of the institution is one and the same—to declare the Son of God the Saviour of men, “for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Eph. iv. 13.

Borne down the current of divine revelation, we have arrived with Israel at the mountain that burned with fire, and at awful distance, with trembling eyes, beheld its summit involved in clouds, clothed in terror; and with wonder and joy contemplated the cloud dispersing, the thunder ceasing, the terror done away, and Mount Sinai transformed into Mount Zion. Whatever farther progress we make, in whatever direction we proceed, we shall find this exceeding high mountain still in view; and, whether under the conduct of the leader and commander of Israel, or of the Champion of Christianity, we are equally led by “one” and the same “Spirit” in “one hope” to “one Lord, one faith, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all,” Eph. iv. 5, 6.

We shall endeavour to connect our past and following Course of Lectures, by the view here presented to us by the apostle, of the plan of Providence in the redemption of the world; and the execution of it, “by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ.” And you will be pleased to observe,

I. It is God’s *own purpose*. The contrivance, the discovery, the progress, the accomplishment, all, all is

from heaven. In what relates to this world, in what contributes to the sustentation and comfort of a transient life, human sagacity, ingenuity and industry may challenge a little praise. Men soon invented and improved the necessary, useful, and ornamental arts. They soon learnt to build cities, to work in brass and iron, to “handle the harp and organ.” But their dexterity, address, perseverance and success in the pursuit of perishable interest, form an humiliating contrast with their awkwardness, indolence, inattention and incapacity in their higher, their spiritual and everlasting concerns. Wise in trifles, or to do evil, how to do good they find not. The experiment was permitted to be fully made. It was proved how far the powers of nature could go. Egypt, Assyria, Greece, Rome, improved one upon another; and what was the result? “The world by wisdom knew not God.” “They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fore-footed beasts, and creeping things,” Rom. i. 22, 23.

To increase our wonder and mortification, when God’s purpose of mercy was declared, when his method of salvation was revealed, men were “slow of heart to believe.” They “resisted the Holy Spirit;” Christ “came to his own and his own received him not.” The disciples themselves understood not, believed not “what the prophets had spoken.” No wonder then that the doctrine of the cross was “to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.” Here then is *a purpose*, which not only is not of man’s forming, but which man uniformly and violently opposed. In other cases, we behold the wisdom of God blending itself with human counsels, directing, subduing them to its determination, and the great God graciously condescending to divide his glory with the creature. But

if there be a design more peculiarly *his*, from which he claims undivided praise, which was not, which could not be of man, nor “according to our works,” it is this, the gracious design of “saving them that believe,” by Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

II. This leads us forward to observe, that, as the work of redemption is JEHOVAH’S *own* peculiar *purpose*, so it is a purpose of *grace*. The thoughts of “the Father of spirits” are unfolded, and they are “thoughts of peace.” Transporting view! Behold the greatest and most glorious of all beings employing himself in devising the means of doing good, of communicating happiness, of relieving the miserable; and forming a scheme of benevolence which extends from eternity to eternity, and comprehends innumerable myriads of rational beings restored, recovered from ignorance, from guilt, from misery, to wisdom, to holiness, to perfect and exalted felicity. Blessed *purpose*! The formation of man, the creation of an universe are only parts of it. Man was formed that he might be redeemed: was sent into this world to be prepared for “heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” The firmament was expanded, adorned, lighted up, to witness the display of “the exceeding riches of the grace of God, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus;” and every successive opening of the plan of Providence is only a new discovery, a more endearing expression of the love of Christ “which passeth knowledge,” of “the peace of God which passeth all understanding.” Think, O guilty man, think, O my soul, what a *purpose* of *justice*, think what a *purpose* of *wrath* would have been, had “God sent his Son into the world to *condemn* the world!”—The spirit fails at the dreadful thought. Behold an insulted God descending to confound the pride and presumption of the builders of Babel; and mark their speedy dispersion. Behold a righteous God descended on a purpose of fiery indignation against polluted Sodom; and consider, in trem-

bling silence, the smoke of her torment ascending up to heaven. Behold a whole world of ungodly men overwhelmed with the waters of a deluge; and learn how dreadful, how inconceivably dreadful a deliberate *purpose* of vengeance is. And, when you have pondered it well, reflect with wonder, gratitude and delight, that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" John iii. 16. that Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. Again,

III. This *purpose* of God, this *purpose of grace* was formed, *before the world began*. Human purposes are feeble, fluctuating, unenlightened; obstructed by unforeseen events, they are constrained to change their direction, and to assume a new form. The imperfect work which through many difficulties is at length executed, bears no manner of resemblance to the original design. Man performs what he may, because he cannot effect what he would. He is governed by circumstances over which he has no power. But the distinctions of past and future vanish away from before the eye of God. There can be no difficulty in the way of almighty power, nothing concealed from the view of omniscience. The duration of a world sinks into a single moment before Him who is "from everlasting to everlasting." Contingency and chance can have no effect on the counsels of Him "who seeth the end from the beginning," and saith, "*My counsel shall stand, and I will fulfil all my pleasure.*"

Christianity as old as the creation! It boasts a much more ancient date. The creation is of yesterday, the world is not yet six thousand years old; but christianity is of the essence of God himself. It bears date "of old, even from everlasting." "This pure river of water of life" proceeds out of the throne of God, who dwells in inaccessible light. Imagination wearies itself, thought is lost, in tracing it up to its source.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, who from eternity, in the greatness of his might, in the plenitude of his goodness, in the incomprehensibility of his wisdom, condescended to fix the bounds of thy habitation, to arrange the events of thy mortal existence, to prepare thy place in the heavenly mansions; who “before the world began” surveyed with complacency and delight his own benevolent design, his own glorious work, the universe which he was about to speak into being, the bit of clay he was to fashion into a man, the immortal spirit which his breath was to inspire, the needy perishing wretch whom his mercy was to redeem. But,

IV. The blessed Author of this gracious, everlasting purpose, has revealed and bestowed it in his own way. He “hath saved us,” “not according to our works,” nor in the way of our own wisdom—it is *given us in Christ Jesus*. From the formation of the merciful plan of salvation to its consummation in glory, the necessity of a Mediator is never for a single moment left out of view. His name, like a sweet perfume, is wafted on the wings of every wind. Survey the world of nature through all its vast extent, and in its minutest particle, and we behold the omnific “WORD by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made that was made.” He also “upholdeth all by the word of his power;” “all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth.” Open the history of redemption at whatever page, and it still unfolds the mercy of God *through* Christ Jesus our Lord. Conducted of the Spirit back to the eternal days of uncreated light, admitted to the deliberations of the councils of peace, we hear the Son of God proclaim, “I am Alpha,” “the beginning.” Carried forward in joyful hope to the day when he shall “make all things new,” the same voice still proclaims, “I am Omega,” “the ending,” “who was and is, and is to come.” Search the scriptures; consult the prophets; to him they “all give witness.” Meditate the promises;

“all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God.” Examine the record; “this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life: and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life,” 1 John v. 11, 12. Consider the ministration of angels; the covenant of promise “was ordained by angels in the hand of a *Mediator*.” Harken to a voice from the most excellent glory: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear him.” All is light and glory; but not a single ray of light is transmitted through any medium but this. All is grace—free, sovereign grace; but there is not one intimation given, not one act of favour conferred, but through the “one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.” To him let every knee bow, to him every tongue confess, of things in earth, and things in heaven. What saith the scripture? “He putteth no trust in his saints, and his angels he chargeth with folly.” Is not this a plain declaration, that the highest and holiest of created beings are imperfect and dependent; that they stand in need of a Mediator and Advocate in order to their acceptance with a holy God? And is it not for this reason, that, “when he bringeth in the First-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him?”—It being the fundamental law of God’s *everlasting kingdom* before the world was, and after it shall be burnt up and pass away, with all that it contains, under patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, under the legal and under the evangelical dispensation, under the dominion of grace and in glory, on earth and in heaven, that there should be access to, hope in, and acceptance with God, for men and for angels, only through the Son of his love, the eternal Word which made and supports all things.

V. In conformity with this glorious *purpose, and grace in Christ Jesus*, what hath been executed? Every thing worthy of a design so grand, every thing worthy

of its great "Author," worthy of the glorious Finisher of our faith." His *appearing* hath *made it manifest*. The clearest-sighted of the prophets, like the blind man only half restored to vision, saw men but as trees walking, but now, under the gospel, the dullest and most despised among believers sees every thing plainly; he sees the eternal purpose of God written in characters which he can read and understand; he compares the model with the structure, and finds the tabernacle erected in the plain, the perfect counterpart of the pattern delivered in the mount: He finds the scriptures fulfilled, the predictions verified, the types explained, realized, justified, all things finished in and by the Lord Christ.

What hath been executed? *He hath abolished death*, that hated, hideous spectre, through fear of whom the fallen posterity of Adam are "subject to bondage." He hath restrained the power, put an end to the dominion, annihilated the existence of the king of terrors." Through sin death gained admission into the world; in sin his empire is founded; by sin he is armed with a mortal sting. By the great propitiation for sin he is banished thence, his reign is terminated, his sting is plucked out. Ask that sickly, pining creature, what it would be to have the disease which is perceptibly preying upon his vitals abolished? Ask that dejected prisoner of despair, what it would be to have his debt discharged, and the writ of his confinement abolished? Ask the wretch condemned, what it would be to have the fatal hand-writing of judgment that is against him abolished? And let the answers you would receive convey, as well as they can, a sense of the obligation under which we lie, to Him who hath done away the deadly plague which wastes, which threatens, which destroys the soul; to Him, who hath paid the enormous debt "to the uttermost farthing," purchased a release, set open the prison doors; to Him who hath cancelled the awful sentence of a righteous God, "nailing it to his cross." He hath *abolished death*, with all the wo

that leads to it, all the dreaded wo that is in it, all the more tremendous wo that succeeds: sickness and pain, anguish and old age; the bitter pang that rends asunder the body and the spirit; the hell that follows. And by what wonderful means hath all this been effected? "Through death" he has destroyed "him that had the power of death." Into his own snare the deceiver has fallen; by his own weapons the enemy has been disarmed; his own triumph hath proved his ruin. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57.

What hath been executed? He hath *brought life and immortality to light*. It is more than flattering hope or fond desire; it is more than the speculation of a philosophic mind, or the presumptuousness of reasoning pride; it is more than patriarchal confidence, or the dawning light of Mosaic revelation. It is desire warranted, and hope supported by facts; it is reason justified and confirmed by demonstration; it is the morning light of promise, advanced to the perfect day of discovery and accomplishment. "He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you," Rom. viii. 11. "For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him," 1 Thess. iv. 14. This is not the cold peradventure of a sage, saying, "If in this I err, I willingly err;" but the blessed assurance of an apostle, saying, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day," 2 Tim. i. 12. "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,

which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing," 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8.

And can it be necessary to inquire who caused this light to arise? Who removed the veil, and disclosed the hidden glories of eternity? What power could tune the human tongue to such raptures, and inspire a mortal breast with such holy and triumphant joy? "God is the LORD, which hath showed us light." It is "the revelation of Jesus Christ, who showeth to his servants things which must shortly come to pass." "By the *gospel* life and immortality are brought to light;" "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages, and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory," Col. i. 26, 27.

Learn hence the folly and danger of all opposition to the plans of eternal Providence. "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against Him and hath prospered?" Job. ix. 4. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision. Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession," Psal. ii. 1—4, 6, 8. "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God," Acts v. 38, 39. "Verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled," Matt. v. 18. "Wo be to him who striveth with his Maker." Sinner, learn wis-

dom in time; cease from the ruinous contention; "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks;" thou art wounding, destroying only thyself. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him," Psal. ii. 12.

—Christians, be of good courage; "in patience possess ye your souls." God will support and vindicate the cause that is his own. His truth and faithfulness, evinced by the interposition of ages past, are a full security for his care and attention through ages to come. Time, which impairs all things else, gives stability, force and effect to the purposes of Heaven. The dissolution of the frame of nature is the consummation of the work of redemption. As the writings of Moses are an improvement upon the traditional knowledge of the antediluvian world, and as the gospel is an improvement upon the law and the prophets, so, "according to his promise," we look for a new economy, which shall be an improvement upon, and an extension, confirmation and accomplishment of the gospel dispensation.

—Learn to aspire after the honour and happiness of working together with God in forwarding this gracious design. It is the glory of the most exalted of all beings; and therefore, surely, deservedly claims the employment of the noblest powers of man. What heart would not rejoice in putting forth a helping hand towards rearing this blessed fabric, were it but to drive a pin, or fasten a cord. Remember that carelessness here is highly criminal; that to sit still is not only robbing yourself of the most exquisite pleasure, and declining the highest honour of which your nature is capable, but is at the same time the highest insult to your Creator, and the most certain means of incurring his displeasure. Look around you, and observe these myriads of your fellow-creatures, less favoured of Heaven than you are, consider them well, and be to them in the place of God. Extend to them that compassion,

which the Father of mercies hath extended toward thee.

See, my brothers, they are deformed, diseased in body; they are distressed in their circumstances; they are grieved in mind; alas, they “are dead in trespasses and sins!” Lost to God, lost to all the valuable purposes of existence, better for them, they had never been born. But yet they are your brethren; they are susceptible of pleasure and pain like you; the same sun enlightens them; the gospel aims at relieving them as well as you; the same God created and sustains and cares for you both. Have pity upon them; strive to restore them to peace with themselves, to peace with the world, to peace with God. “It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish,” Matt. xviii. 14. “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon them.” Let the *purpose of grace* comprehend them, even them also.

Son of God, who didst restore agility to the lame, sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, the faculty of speech to the dumb, life to the dead, and who givest wisdom to the wise—thou shalt renovate all things, thou shalt abolish death and point out the path of life! O, I shall bless thee with transports of joy ineffable, in the day when the powers of heaven shall be shaken and the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the earth with all that it contains shall be consumed! Then thy suffering creatures, delivered from all the ills which oppressed them, shall be clothed upon with a glorious and immortal body, fashioned like to thy glorious body; shall be perfectly conformed to thy blessed image—the image of the first-born among many brethren! Then the Saviour of the world shall pronounce, not from the expiring agony of the cross, but from the radiance of a throne above the skies,” “It is finished!” Then He who “maketh all things new,” shall with complacency contemplate this second glorious creation, and proclaim “all is good, yea, very good!”

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE II.

And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sanai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount, in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.—EXODUS xxiv. 15—18.

BREAD is not more necessary to the support of human life, than religion is to the happiness of a rational being. Man, in his better, his immortal part, “lives by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” In more than one instance the miracle has been exhibited, of sustaining the body without food, and yet no pain nor inconveniency felt; but for the soul to exist, and to exist in comfort, undirected by the precepts, unenlightened by the discoveries, unsupported by the consolations of religion, is a miracle not to be performed. It is the more to be lamented that the attempt is so often fatally made, of living “without God in the world,” of pursuing a happiness that is independent of the great Source of light and joy; of seeking peace, rest and enjoyment in the neglect or violation of his commandments. Happy it is for men, if after having made the fruitless experiment of “seek-

ing the living among the dead," and after having at length discovered that success is vanity, and that disappointment is vexation of spirit, have been persuaded, before it was too late, to draw their felicity from the pure and never-failing sources of faith and a good conscience; happy they, who reconciled to God through Christ Jesus their Lord, enjoy real tranquillity in life, and well-grounded hope in death.

We tremble as we behold Moses advancing to the summit of the burning mountain to meet God. Who can walk into the midst of a flaming furnace and live? But is it possible to remove from God an instant of time, a hair's breadth of space? No: God is about our path and our bed, is watching our going out and coming in, our lying down and rising up. God is in this place; and, were our eyes opened, we should even now behold his face clothed with the frowns of just displeasure, or beaming with the smiles of paternal love.

Was the law given by "the disposition of angels," arrayed in all their majesty and might? Oh how benign their aspect, how affectionate their assiduity, how vigilant their care, could we but behold them, while they aid the preaching of the everlasting gospel, while they attend the assemblies of a christian church, and minister to them who are the heirs of salvation! As the awfulness and solemnity of the prophet's condition are not peculiar to him, and to that important occasion, so neither are the privileges which he enjoyed nor the communion to which he was admitted, peculiar and personal. Christian, you have but to retire into your closet and to shut the door after you, and you are immediately on the top of a higher mountain than Moses climbed, and are as near to God as he was in the most precious moments of the most intimate communication. Alone, or in company, we have access at all times to the throne of grace; and we have what gave him safety and confidence in drawing nigh unto

God; an Advocate with the Father, a great High Priest, a Mediator betwixt God and us.

The great Jehovah, having delivered in every circumstance of magnificence that could excite attention, procure respect, and enforce obedience, that law, whose general nature, tendency and design, together with its relation to the evangelical dispensation, were the subject of a former Lecture, proceeded to regulate their civil polity. But not by an audible voice, in the ears of all the people, as he had done the law of the ten commandments, but in private conference with Moses, to be by him delivered to the people, he delivered those institutions of a civil and political nature, which regarded their social and national capacity. In studying these, the lovers of scripture will rejoice to trace the justest and most comprehensive views of human nature, the noblest and most liberal ideas of legislation, the most perfect equity, the profoundest sagacity, and the most unbounded kindness and benevolence. But it exceeds our strength, and it consists not with our plan, to go into the detail of these excellent statutes. We pursue the history.

The voice from Sinai having, in dreadful glory, proclaimed the conditions of this new covenant, directions are given for the solemn and public ratification of it. This was done that the obligation which was originally, invariably and necessarily binding upon the parties, might acquire additional force from voluntary consent, and from the intervention of august and significant ceremonies. I trust it will be neither unentertaining nor uninteresting to attend to the description of these ceremonies as they stand upon the sacred record. They are highly interesting whether we consider them as the venerable remains of a very remote antiquity, being no less than three thousand three hundred and forty-three years prior to the present time;* or, as the original compact, in the constitution of an ancient, important,

*A. D. 1792.

well-known, and generally interesting national government; or, as forming a part of the plan of a divine administration, whose force can never be spent, whose influence on human virtue and happiness can never expire.

God has “spoken once in his holiness,” in a sensible manner, has made himself seen, heard and felt by a whole people together. But it is neither consistent with his dignity, nor favourable to man’s improvement, that he should always or often make himself known in that manner. He has spoken thus once, that every hearer might have a personal reason for acknowledging and adoring the dread Jehovah, the Fountain of all power, the supreme Author of every establishment. And he speaks thus but seldom, that all men may learn to revere conscience, his vicegerent upon earth, to study his word, the interpreter of his nature and will; and to respect and “be subject to the powers which be ordained of God, not only for wrath but for conscience sake.” Directions are accordingly given to ratify the covenant, not by the whole people in person, but by their representatives. The persons summoned to attend on this great occasion, are; first, Moses himself, who was to represent the Mediator between the high contracting parties; then Aaron and his two sons, Nadab and Abihu, who represented the Levitical body or order of priesthood; and finally, seventy of the elders of Israel, who were to act in the name of the congregation at large. When we observe the names of Nadab and Abihu in this respectable list, and look forward to their dreadful and untimely end, we are led to a reflection of no small importance in studying the sacred volume; namely, that the destination of Providence in raising particular persons to eminent, honourable and important stations in civil society, is something extremely different from “the election according to grace.” A Cyrus and a Nebuchadnezzar may be the servants of God, to execute his vengeance or his

love, without knowing any thing of their Employer; and their private and personal character may remain unaffected by their public conduct. The man according to God's own heart, in the view of some great object of public utility, has sometimes been found dishonouring God by private vice, and degrading, destroying himself, while he has been materially serving the world. This most serious consideration dictated to the great apostle of the Gentiles that necessary rule of conduct. "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away," 1 Cor. ix. 27. And it is a loud call to every one who acts in a public capacity, to support and adorn it by private virtue and unaffected piety. While the great God was thus putting honour on these seventy three persons in the eyes of all the people, he sees it necessary to put and to keep them in mind of their distance and dependence; "Worship ye afar off: Moses alone shall come near the Lord, but they shall not come nigh."

This message being reported to the people, they express their cheerful and unanimous consent. "All the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do," Verse 3. Moses upon this reduces into writing the articles of the treaty between God and the people, to be recited aloud in the hearing of all the parties concerned, previous to the solemnities of the ensuing ratification. According to the form observed upon such occasions, rising up early in the morning, he builds an altar under the hill, the emblem of the divine presence, on the one side; "and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel," Verse 4; or an heap consisting of twelve large stones, according to the number of the tribes, to represent the people, on the opposite side; and upon it he offers a burnt-offering, a sacrifice made by fire unto the Lord. The application of the *blood* of the victim principally challenges our attention in the

celebration of this awful rite. It was divided into two equal parts : one half was put into basons, and placed by the twelve pillars of stone : where in all probability were arranged the seventy elders, the representatives of every tribe standing by the pillar peculiar to their tribe : the other half was sprinkled upon the altar on the other side. Thus that which constituted the life of the sacrifice was separated, and Moses standing between the divided parts, and having some of the blood now denominated the blood of the covenant, or of the purifying victim, in his hands, rehearsed aloud the words of the covenant in the audience of the people, who were represented by their elders, and then solemnly demanded whether they acceded to the conditions of it.

The form of adjuration employed in such cases, as you heard in a former Lecture,* now in the hands of many of you, was inexpressibly awful and tremendous. "As the body of this victim is cleft asunder, as the blood of this animal is poured out, so let my body be divided and my blood shed, if I prove unsteadfast and perfidious." Under an engagement of this dreadful import, they consent to the conditions of the treaty, saying, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient."† Whereupon Moses takes of the blood, and sprinkles it upon the people, in the persons of their representatives, as he had before sprinkled it upon the altar, expressing thereby God's acceptance of their persons and services, and his engagement to fulfil all that the covenant promised on his part. Matters being thus adjusted, and peace established, the burnt sacrifice is succeeded by a peace-offering, and the parties, as friends, sit down to partake of a common repast. This is evidently the meaning of the expression in the end of the eleventh verse: "Also they saw God, and did eat and drink;" that is, as in the presence of the most high God, at peace with him, and

* Vol. I. Lecture xiii.

† Verse 7.

at peace among themselves, they did eat of the same bread and drank of the same cup. It would be easy, were it necessary, to confirm this interpretation by quoting the practice of other nations in latter times, undoubtedly borrowed from rites of God's own institution. It would appear from the letter of the narration, that the scene of this sacred feast was a higher region of the mountain than that where the covenant was ratified. He builded the altar *under* the hill, and set up the pillars, as it is ver. 4; and when the solemnities of that inferior station were duly celebrated, the nation whom God had thus chosen is exalted to a superior rank, and admitted to a more intimate union with their Maker. "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God now shines, calling to the heavens from above, and to the earth, Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice," Psalm l. 5. Purified by blood, the blood of the covenant, they are encouraged to mount higher and higher, to approach nearer and nearer; they are enabled, with enlightened eyes, to discern more clearly, and to look more steadfastly.

Being sprinkled with blood, "*then* went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire-stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink," Verses 9, 10, 11. What a stream of splendid ideas here rushes in upon us! "They saw the GOD of Israel." They saw Him whose presence is the glory of heaven, the light of whose countenance is the joy of angels and archangels; they saw Him descended to earth, to be the light, glory and joy of his people, to dwell among them, and to be their friend, their father and their God; they saw him engaging himself by every thing that could affect the sen-

ses, kindle the imagination, or melt the heart, to guide and protect them, to provide for them, to bless them and to do them good. “They saw the God of *Israel*,” their fathers’ God, their own covenant God, and the God of their seed to the latest generations. They saw God! but, what did they see? That face whose lustre constrains the cherubim to cover their faces with their wings—those eyes, which “as a flame of fire go up and down through the earth,” which discern impurity in the heavens and folly in Angels—that mouth which spake the universe into existence, and whose lightest word shakes the foundations of the everlasting hills—the hand that wields the thunder, or the feet that walk upon the swift wings of the wind? No: the nobles of Israel had shrunk into nothing before such an awful display of Deity. He needed not to have laid his hand upon them; one glance of those piercing eyes which guard the law, had been sufficient to consume them in a moment. What then did they see? What was *under* his feet; and even that, something which could not be represented, expressed or described; “as it were the body of heaven in his clearness,” Verse 10. Like Paul caught up into the third heaven, but incapable to tell whether in the body or out of the body; caught up into paradise, and listening to the conversation of its blest inhabitants, but what he heard were words unspeakable, “which it is not lawful for a man to utter,” 2 Cor. xii. 4. Was it needful to caution such men and such a people against idolatry? What similitude could they employ, who though they enjoyed the fullest and most satisfying demonstration of Jehovah’s presence, felt their understanding confined, their imagination checked, their senses confounded. They are lost in a splendor which at once attracted and repelled; which was only the foundation and external vail where glory resided, the pavement not the ceiling, the habitation not the inhabitant; a splendor resembling the transparency of the gem, which

seems to transmit the light, and the solidity of the gem, which no force can penetrate.

It is too fanciful to suppose, that there is singular beauty in the *colour* of the jewel here specified by the sacred penman, who was an eye-witness of this glorious appearance, and who attempts to convey an idea of what he saw. "Paved work of a sapphire stone," the happy medium between the fair and dazzling lustre of the diamond, and the dim familiar complexion of the emerald: not the fiery glare of the empyrean nor the sober verdure of the earth; but the pellucid azure of the chrystal sky, which equally corrects and tempers the dazzling power of the noontide sun, and the oppressive gloom of the midnight hour; which possesses light enough to discover the object without distressing the organ, and shade sufficient to relieve without sinking into obscurity?

Not overwhelmed, but cheered and elevated by this moderate display of the divine glory; having seen God and yet living; feeling his hand upon them, yet uncrushed by its weight; the nobles of the children of Israel conclude the services of this eventful day by the banquet of peace and love. *They* must now return to secular employments, and descend from the mountain; but Moses has yet farther manifestations of the will of God to receive, and is commanded to ascend still higher. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them," Verse 12. Be our attainments what they will, who is it that "hath attained, or is already perfect?" Our arrival at one eminence is only to see from its summit another, and thence another still rising above us: but in moral and intellectual pursuits, this is a disappointment that mortifies not, an exercise that fatigues not: the joy of heaven is to make progress in

the contemplation and discovery of perfection that knows no limit, knows no end.

From this higher elevation, Moses is informed that he is to receive the same law in a different form: "I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them," Verse 12. As he arises towards heaven, the dispensation of which he was the minister becomes more and more plain and palpable. A matter of such deep importance must not be trusted to the vague and varying traditions of fallible and changing men, but collected into a record that can defy the lapse of time, and preserve unchanging truth and dignity amidst the revolutions of empire and the wreck of nations. This was graciously intended to prevent the necessity of a frequent interposition of Deity, which must at length have diminished its impression by commonness and familiarity. What God therefore at first, with his creative finger, curiously engraved on the heart of man, he audibly pronounced amidst the awful glories of Sinai, and afterwards committed to writing on tables of stone for perpetual preservation. And happy it is for man, that he has not been left, for moral and religious instruction, to the traditions of men who are ever changing and inconsistent with themselves, or to the flimsy, imperfect, contradictory systems of philosophy and science, falsely so called; but that he is brought to the law and to the testimony, to Moses and the prophets, to the Saviour himself and his apostles, to a bible and a sabbath. Happy it is that every one is furnished with one and the same light to his feet and lamp to his paths, and that all are taught of God from the least to the greatest. But indeed the care of Providence in preserving this precious record, and transmitting it to us unaltered, unimpaired, is a perpetual miracle, a series of revelations, which we are bound to acknowledge with wonder, and to improve with gratitude.

In the next ascent into the mount, Moses is accompanied, a certain length at least, and no doubt by divine appointment, by Joshua his minister, on whom God began to put honour thus early, in order to exalt him in the eyes of the people whom he was destined one day to command, and to prepare him betimes for the wise and faithful discharge of his high office, by communion with God. As this absence of Moses, from the weighty duties of his charge, was to be of longer continuance than usual, the management of civil affairs, and the administration of justice were committed, in the mean time, to Aaron and Hur, his companions and coadjutors on the mount, when by the lifting and holding up his hands Amalek was smitten before Israel. Was ever spot of this earthly ball so highly honoured as that barren mountain in the midst of the desert? Persons, not places, possess dignity. The presence of God confers greatness and importance; He can receive none from created, much less from artificial pomp and magnificence. The great God “dwelleth not in temples made with hands.” “The heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him;” but “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones,” Isai. lvii. 15.

The curiosity of travellers has been excited to visit this scene of wonders. But is there not an intentional obscurity spread over the description, to baffle idle curiosity, and to call us to the spirit and intention of the dispensation, not the external apparatus of it? Wherever there is this book; wherever there is a principle of conscience; wherever there is common reason and understanding, there is the law, there is Sinai, there is God. It is not to make a pilgrimage to the holy sepulchre, to stand on Calvary, to drive infi-

dels by force of arms out of Jewry, that constitute the faith and piety of the gospel; but to know Christ Jesus and him crucified in “the *power* of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death,” Phil. iii. 10.

The appearance of God’s presence and providence vary their aspect, according to the distance at which they are contemplated, and the medium through which we view them. What to the nobles in the mount appeared “as it were a paved work of a sapphire-stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness,” verse 10—to the multitude in the plain wore a more threatening and terrible appearance. “The sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire, on the top of the mount, in the eyes of the children of Israel,” verse 17. Fire at once consumes and refines, leaves to the pure gold all its solidity and value, and lays hold only of the dross. Moses undismayed, because following the command of God, advances into the midst of consuming fire; and so far is nature from being overpowered and destroyed by this keen, piercing element, that it is rather cherished and strengthened by it. Flame supplies the place of food; instead of perishing in a moment, at the end of forty days, without any other means of subsistence, we see the prophet descend in additional glory and renovated vigour; for all creatures are and do that which their Creator wills.

The next seven chapters contain a minute description of that sacred structure and its service, which God intended should be “the shadow of good things to come;” of which every iota and tittle was of divine contrivance and appointment, and undoubtedly had a meaning and significancy which we cannot in every particular find out to perfection. The pattern of it was showed unto Moses in the mount, and particular directions were given for its construction; in these were employed the forty days mentioned in the close of this chapter; when the history suddenly breaks off

to exhibit a scene of a very different nature, which, if God permit, will form the subject of the next Lecture; namely, the unprovoked revolt of Israel to Idolatry, the fabrication of the golden calf, and the hasty descent of Moses, to stem that dreadful torrent of guilt and wrath which had begun to flow.

In the ratification of the covenant between God and Israel, we see the stress that was laid upon blood. The blood of the innocent victim must be poured out, and the altar must be sprinkled with blood. The elders of the people must be purified with blood. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission, no friendship, no peace, no access: life must be paid to redeem life. Blood in the sacrifice is the one thing needful, the one thing significant: blood in religious offices is all in all. Blood applied to any other purpose, is contaminating, unhallowed, unwholesome for food, polluting, not purifying to the flesh, is a source of corruption and death, not of health and life. The idea of blood, in one view or the other, runs through the whole history of redemption. It occurs not more frequently in the Old Testament than in the New. One great sacrifice has indeed put an end for ever to the future effusion of blood; but it is still symbolically held out as the medium of reconciliation and access to God. "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace," Eph. i. 7. We are redeemed, "not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," 1 Peter i. 18, 19. We "draw nigh to God through the blood of his Son." When we approach to ratify every one his personal covenant with God at the communion table, we commemorate the death of Christ in the symbols of his body broken, and his blood shed. "This is the blood of the covenant, said Moses, which the Lord hath made with you," and "this is the New Testament in my blood, saith Christ, shed for the remission of sins." When we look toward eternal rest,

the holy city, the Jerusalem that is above, the new and living way which leads thither, which conducts into the holiest of all, is through the rent vail of the Redeemer's flesh. "His blood be upon us and on our children," exclaimed the Jews, while they were crucifying the Lord of glory. Dreadful imprecation!

O Lord, require not our blood of our own hand, nor of every man at the hand of his brother. O Lord, let this man's blood be upon us and upon our children, not as an oppressive load, as it was on those who with wicked hands impiously shed it, but as an atonement for our sins, as a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour, acceptable unto God; that "being justified by faith, we may have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we may have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Amen. Amen.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE III.

And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden ear-rings which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden ear-rings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.—EXODUS xxxii. 1—4.

THE real instances of human folly and extravagance far exceed the conceptions of the most lively imagination. All history, and every day's experience, justify the mortifying account which the prophet gives of our corrupted nature—"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Jer. xvii. 9. The partiality of self-love, and the charity of a kind disposition, would at times lead us to form a more favourable judgment both of ourselves and of others, than we deserve. The form of sin, seen in its nakedness, is so hideous, that we shrink from it

with horror; but use familiarizes the spectre; and we are insensibly led to bear, to be, and to do that which once we abhorred. Could a prophet have foretold one half of the irregularities, the excesses, the enormities of our lives, we should have deemed the prediction a falsehood and an insult; and, with the resentment of conscious virtue, we should have been ready to exclaim in the words of Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Yet alas! the event has wofully verified the cruel imputation; and exhibited the man fallen from his excellency, become the very monster he justly detested; the man sunk into an object of pity, of scorn, or of detestation to himself and to mankind.

Many practices appear to us absurd and unnatural merely because we are not accustomed to them. Herodotus relates, that Darius, king of Persia, having assembled the Greeks who were under his command, demanded of them what bribe they would take to induce them to eat the dead bodies of their parents, as the Indians did? Being answered, that it was impossible for them ever to abandon themselves to so great inhumanity, the king, in the presence of the same Greeks, demanded of some Indians what consideration would prevail with them to burn the dead bodies of their parents as the Greeks did? The Indians expressing the utmost horror, entreated the king to impose upon them any hardship rather than that. Among the Hottentots, the aged, so long as they are able to do any work, are treated with great tenderness and humanity; but when they can no longer crawl about, they are thrust out of the society, and put in a solitary hut, there to die of hunger or age, or to be devoured of wild beasts. If you expostulate with them upon the savageness of this custom, they are astonished you should reckon it inhuman: "Is it not much greater cruelty," they ask, "to suffer persons to linger and languish out a miserable old age, and not put an end

to their wretchedness, by putting an end to their days?"

Idolatry is one of those practices, to our apprehension, so foolish and unreasonable, that we wonder how it ever obtained footing in the world; and with difficulty are we brought to believe the avidity with which whole nations have given into it. The particular circumstances of the Israelites in the wilderness, render their proneness to idol worship peculiarly monstrous and unaccountable. The chain of miracles which accompanied their deliverance from Egypt; that constant symbol of the divine presence which attended them, the pillar of fire and cloud; the daily miraculous supply of bread from heaven; the recent anathema pronounced against the worship of images from the dreadful glory of Mount Sinai; the scrupulous care employed, if we may use the expression, to exhibit no manner of similitude of the Deity in Horeb, to prevent the possibility of a pretence to use, themselves, or to transmit to posterity any sensible representation of the invisible God; all these, superadded to the plainest dictates of common sense and reason, clothe with a blackness and malignity not to be expressed, the strange conduct which is the subject of this chapter.

Moses, foreseeing the length of his absence in the mount, had wisely delegated his power to Aaron and Hur, that the operations of government and the administration of justice might suffer no interruption. God, the great God, was now vouchsafing to employ himself in prescribing a mode, and a ministry of worship for his Israel, which should possess all the pomp and splendor displayed by the nations in the service of their false gods, together with a sacredness and dignity peculiar to itself. He was preparing to gratify their very senses by external show, as their souls by heavenly wisdom. He was planning a tabernacle, establishing a priesthood, and appointing festivals and

sacrifices, whose magnificence should leave them nothing to regret in the glory which they had seen in Egypt; and, at that very time, they are employing themselves in devising and executing a plan of religious service, equally disrespectful to God and dishonourable to themselves.

Their guilt begins in sinful impatience and presumption. In matters both of life and religion men greatly err, when they take upon them to carve for themselves. "Vain men would be wise, though man be born like a wild asses colt," Job xi. 12. The transition is so sudden that it seems incredible. Not many days are past since they had given the most solemn, explicit and unreserved consent to the whole of the divine law. "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient," Verse 7. The treaty had been but just ratified by a covenant, a sacrifice, and a feast, with a solemnity not easily to be forgotten. The noise of the mighty thunderings has scarcely ceased: the ineffable glory of the God of Israel is yet present to their eyes; they have not well recovered from the terror inspired by that voice which made heaven and earth to tremble. Yet even thus circumstanced, as one man they fly to the appointment, not of a new leader and commander, though that had been ingratitude without a parallel, but with an impiety the most shocking and confounding, to the creation of a new god. And the very first exercise of the power which was committed unto Aaron for the public good, is to be the leader, the abettor, and an example, in practising the abominations of that country from which they had been so happily delivered.

"And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him,"

Verse 1. There is a sottishness, a madness, as well as a wickedness in certain vices, which, at first sight, we should deem inconsistent with each other. The irrationality of the brute, the frenzy of the lunatic, and the malignity of the demon, here discover themselves at once; and leave us perplexed which we are most to wonder at and deplore. What shall we say of the stupidity which talked of *making* gods, and of following that as a guide which itself could not move, but as it was carried? With what notes of indignation shall we mark our abhorrence of that base ingratitude which could speak contemptuously of such a benefactor as Moses; “*This* Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him?” Verse 1. With what holy resentment must we execrate the spirit that could deal thus perfidiously, presumptuously, with God?

After we have vented our anger and astonishment upon the conduct of these vile Israelites, let us pause and examine ourselves. Asserted by a strong hand and a stretched-out arm into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, have we never reverted in thought, in desire, in practice, into that very thralldom of sin from which the Son of God came to set us free? Lying under the weight of benefits much more precious and bound by engagements equally solemn and explicit, have we never swerved from the path of duty, never lost sight of our vows, never failed in our obedience? With so much clearer and fuller discoveries of the being, nature and will of the one living and true God, have we feared and loved him, and only him; have we never bowed the knee to mammon, never worshipped in the house of Rimmon, never kissed the image of Baal? Alas, alas! we hate and condemn some sins merely because they are not our own, while we stand chargeable in the sight of God and man, with equal or greater offences of a different kind; so blinded as not to perceive, so self-deluded as not to feel their enormity.

Is it not amazing to observe on the part of Aaron no reluctance against this horrid proposal; to hear from his lips no remonstrance? Is it thus he discharges his sacred trust? Is this the man whom Jehovah was, in the mean while, designing to advance, and promoting to the dignity of the priesthood? Many things have been alleged in extenuation of his fault, though nothing can amount to a full vindication of his conduct. The conciseness of the sacred history, it has been said, may have suppressed some of the more favourable circumstances, and exhibited only a general view of the subject. Some of the Rabbins* pretend that his colleague in office, Hur, had lately been massacred in a popular commotion for daring to resist the prevailing frenzy; and that Aaron complied, through fear of similar treatment, after having thus deprecated the divine displeasure; "O Lord, I look up to thee, who knowest the hearts of men, and who dwellest in the heavens: Thou art witness that I act thus contrary to my own will. Lay it not to my charge."

Others explain away great part of the criminality, both of Aaron and of the people, by alleging that all they demanded, and all he gave them, was an external object, where they might deposit the homage which they wished to render to a Supreme God: and thus they interpret the request of the people, "Make us a sensible object of divine worship, which may always be before our eyes, and supply the place of God, when we shall be told of all the wonders he wrought for us in Egypt."† And a learned prelate‡ of our own country labours to prove, that Aaron presented only a hieroglyphic of the strength and power of the Deity, and he produces a few passages from an-

* In Schemoth Rabba, Sect. xli. fol. 156.

† R. Juda, in Lib. Cozri. Part 1. Sect. xcvi. fol. 47.

‡ Patrick, Bishop of Ely, on Exod. xxxii. 4. page 635.

cient authors to prove, that the ox was an emblem of royal and sovereign authority, and the horns, in particular, a common and well known emblem of strength.

A fourth excuse has been pleaded in behalf of Aaron, founded on the letter of the sacred text. He feigned readiness to comply, according to these apologists,* in hope that the demand of their golden ornaments for the fabrication of the idol, acting upon their love of finery, or of wealth, might bring them to a stand, and break their resolution. But why set up an elaborate defence for a man who stands condemned by his own brother, who had the best means of information; and for one who himself had nothing, or worse than nothing, to produce in his own behalf, when charged by Moses with his fault?

These spoils of the Egyptians had not been obtained in the most honourable manner. Israel "borrowed and paid not again;" and it proves a dreadful snare to them. If they had not carried off the gold, they might perhaps have kept clear of the gods of Egypt. But ill-gotten wealth never was and never can be a blessing; and unwarrantable devices sooner or later come to entangle the feet of those who use them. Mark, how one rapacious domineering passion swallows up many others. "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?" And yet behold the daughters of Israel cheerfully sacrificing the darling embellishments of their persons to a mistaken principle of religion! If there be a passion more violent than another, it is the love of gold in the heart of a Hebrew; but we see one more violent than even that, the delirium of idolatrous superstition.

It is dangerous to have the patterns of evil before our eyes. We soon learn to bear with what we see

*August. Tom. IV. Quæst. xl. in Exod. page 113: and Theodoret. Tom. I. in Exod. Quæst. lxvi. page 3.

frequently; we are insensibly led to approve what we have learned to suffer without being shocked; and what we heartily approve we are not far from adopting. Israel has sustained greater injuries in Egypt than we are at first aware of, and they have been more deeply hurt in their minds than in their persons. The stripes of an Egyptian task-master are healed by the lenient hand of time: but the wounds inflicted by the impure rites of Egyptian idols, are still festering at the heart, and threaten death.

Aaron is too eager and intent upon his shameful work, to escape the suspicion of being hearty in it; “And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt,” Verse 4. All that industry, all that art could do, is employed to confer lustre and value on this worthless object; and yet he would have it believed, when he is called to account, that the form and fashion of the idol was the effect of accident, not of design: “I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf,” Verse 24. What a pitiful figure does ingenious, industrious wickedness make, when it stands exposed, convicted, self-condemned! But the framing and erecting of this idol is not the whole extent of Aaron’s criminality. I am still more shocked at beholding an attempt to blend with its profane worship, the sacred day, the sacred ceremonies and services of the true God. “And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation, and said, To-morrow is a feast to the Lord,” Verse 5. What concord hath Christ with Belial? An attempt to form such an union as this, is more grossly insulting than even avowed neglect or opposition. It freezes the blood to observe a repetition of the same august ceremonies which were lately employed in the mount, for confirming the grand alliance between the great Jehovah and his people, in the set-

ting of this strange league between Israel and a bauble of their own invention. "They rose up early," as men intent upon their purpose; the altar is reared, the sacrifice is offered up, the peace-offering is provided, the feast of friendship is prepared and eaten. "They offered burnt-offerings; and brought peace-offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play," Verse 6. These last words are supposed by some commentators of note to be descriptive of a scene of extreme lewdness and debauchery. And certain it is, that one of the principal instruments of propagating and supporting idolatry, was the attraction of beauty and wantonness, vilely prostituted to decoy strangers into the homage of the impure and worthless deity of the place. That people must be in a dreadful state indeed, among whom religion, the foundation of good morals, the guard of virtue, is employed as a minister to unhallowed pleasure, and a hand-maid to vice.

The prevalence of evil practices is a lamentable thing, but the establishment of wrong principles is much worse. The wholesomest stream may be accidentally tainted and polluted, and work itself pure again; but if the fountain be poisonous, nothing but death can flow from it. "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death," James i. 15.

—We are now conveyed from this awful scene of pollution in the valley, to a much more awful scene of meditated vengeance on the mount. While Moses was solacing himself in the pleasing prospect of being soon dispatched to the people of his charge with messages of love; while he was rejoicing in the important transaction so lately past, confident that all was now settled between God and his people; the joy of this exalted communication is suddenly interrupted by intelligence of a new, unprovoked and unexpected revolt. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down:

for thy people which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, 'These be the gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt,' Verses 7, 8. An offended God refuses any longer to acknowledge as his, a generation of wretches who had rendered themselves so entirely unworthy of his slightest regard. Justice awakes to a recapitulation of the benefits which they had received and the offences which they had committed, and concludes with a resolution totally to consume them. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

In the dialogue which passed upon this occasion, some of the most interesting objects that can be contemplated present themselves to our view. The condescension of divine friendship: As God would not "hide from Abraham the thing which he was about to do;" would take no step towards the destruction of Sodom till that friend of God had been fully heard in its behalf; and could do nothing till Lot was departed; so the same God, rich in mercy, will not arise to vengeance against Israel, till Moses has been consulted and has acquiesced in the sentence. O the wonderful power of faith and prayer! Moses is represented as possessing a constraining power over Omnipotence, the anger of Jehovah refuses to burn till his permission is obtained. O the wonderful grace and condescension of the most High God! Thus is justice ever tempered with mercy: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not," Lam. iii. 22.

A proposal is made to Moses, (and what is too hard for the Lord to perform?) which a selfish heart would eagerly have grasped at; "I will make of thee, says God, a great nation." But selfishness in this

truly great man was controlled by much nobler and more generous principles; zeal for the honour of God, and compassion for a devoted people.

The intercessory addresses of Moses is a master piece of eloquence, and discovers a soul superior to all regards, but such as are worthy of a prophet, a hero, a patriot, and, what is superior to all, the friend of God. "And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt, with great power and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel thy servants, to whom thou swearest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever," Verses 11—13. The holy man of God is concerned not only that the Judge of all the earth should do right, but that the divine conduct should stand vindicated in the eyes of the heathen. He proposes to himself the same end which Jehovah himself has in view in all that he does—the glory of his great name. He nobly prefers the fulfilling of the ancient covenant with his venerable ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to the establishment of a new covenant with himself and his seed. He is willing to decrease, willing that his family continue obscure, that his head be laid low, provided the Lord be magnified, and Israel saved. This is a greatness of mind which religion alone could inspire. Like a true son of Israel, he wrestles and makes supplication; and as a prince he too has power with God, and prevails, if not to prevent every expression of displeasure, at least to prevent the execution of the general doom. Having

obtained this great point, he descends with haste from the mount, bearing in his hand the most precious work of art that skill ever executed. Who does not shudder at the thought of its having been destroyed? “And Moses turned and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables,” Verses 15, 16. But why should we regret that a piece of curious workmanship in dumb matter, was destroyed? That loss soon might be and soon was repaired. Alas! we behold a more shocking spectacle every day—a race of thoughtless wretches deliberately, presumptuously defacing God’s image, destroying his signature, engraved “not on tables of stone, but on the fleshly tables of the heart;” inflicting on themselves a loss never to be repaired, not in a fit of holy zeal, but in a paroxysm of diabolical frenzy.

Moses might destroy the tablets, but the spirit of the writing he could not disannul. When all sensible monuments are dissolved, the law maintains its adamantine solidity, its uncontaminated purity, its unpliant steadiness, its unbending dignity. The tablets were written on both sides, within and without. Every fragment therefore had some part of the law and testimony written upon it. Thus, in every particle of the human frame, there are self-evident traces of the finger of God—the understanding, the heart, the conscience, the memory; shivers indeed, mutilated, defaced, but capable of being repaired and united.

But I find it impossible to collect into one efficient point of view the sequel of this eventful history, within the limits of one discourse. Here therefore we set up another resting place, and from it take a cursory view of the ground over which we have travelled.

I. What a melancholy view presents itself, of the

corruption, the degeneracy and degradation of human nature. Behold a people lost to every noble, generous, manly principle: restrained by no law, awed by no threatening, susceptible of no endearment, influenced by neither shame nor gratitude; boldly overleaping the bounds of reason and religion—and in that people behold “the carnal mind, which is enmity against God: which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Behold “the wickedness of man, how great it is in the earth; and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, how it is only evil continually.” Think not, however, O man, that thou art surveying a distant prospect, or travelling through a foreign land. Think not that these Israelites are sinners above all the men of the earth. When thou hast thoroughly searched and known thyself, no account of human frailty will appear exaggerated. They framed and worshipped a golden image. How many myriads hourly bend the knee to the same idol, changed only a little in form! See the temple of mammon, how it is crowded. His votaries, see how much in earnest they are in their devotions. Early and late the incense ascends. Neither Jewish nor Christian sabbath interrupts their attendance or cools their ardor; while truth, and justice, and mercy, and the love of God are offered a perpetual sacrifice to the insatiate demon, who never says, “It is enough.” Nor think that gold is the only deity which men adore. On searching into thy own bosom, some lurking imp, of different form, complexion and texture will be found; hid in close disguise, unknown indeed of men; but to the eye of God and conscience clearly confessed. Down with it; it is thy dishonour, and threatens thy ruin.

II. Rejoice with trembling, while you contemplate the affecting prospect which opens of the severity and mercy of the great God—the severity, which by the hand of Levi cut off three thousand of the offenders,

in the heat of their offence; which threatened to exterminate the whole race, and which, in "the day of visitation, visited their sin upon them"—the mercy which relented, which pitied and spared the guilty, which listened to the voice of intercession, and accepted the atonement. Thou thyself, O sinner, art a monument of both the one and the other. Thy life is forfeited to justice; thou art daily enduring the punishment of thy transgressions; thou standest continually exposed to severer ills than any thou hast yet felt, and far beyond what fear itself can figure. Yet mercy suffers thee to live; there is hope concerning thee: the glad tidings of salvation are in thine ears; "Behold the lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world!" "Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation!" "Wherefore, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and brake off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor: it may be" more than "a lengthening of thy tranquillity," it may prevent eternal misery.

III. Behold a greater man than Moses is here—an Intercessor more compassionate, more earnest, more powerful: "a Prince with God" who ever prevails; a propitiation ever meritorious and successful: "blood that cleanseth from all sin." "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world," 1 John ii. 1, 2. "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard, in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him," Heb. v. 7—9. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?" Heb. ii. 1, 2, 3.

IV. Let us look forward to "that great and notable day of the Lord," when the law which was delivered audibly from Sinai, which Moses with a rash, inconsiderate hand could break in pieces, but was unable to repair, shall be restored in all its purity and perfection; shall be engraved on every heart, and become legible to every eye: when the hidden glory of the legal dispensation shall be unveiled, and the greater glory of the GOSPEL displayed: when the divine image shall be again impressed on the soul of man, in all its beauty and exactness—and, we ourselves, degraded and lost as we are, shall "be raised together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"—and "beholding with open face as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, shall be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear, what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE IV.

And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, that all the people rose up, and stood every man at his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the tabernacle. And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door. And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.--
EXODUS xxxiii. 8—11.

GUILT is the parent of fear and suspicion; conscious innocence and integrity inspire confidence and tranquillity. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion," Prov. xxviii. 1. "Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God, amongst the trees of the garden," Gen. iii. 8. Moses ascends undaunted to meet the Lord, into the midst of tempest and fire. Behold the height of heaven, how great it is! What so distant as the Creator and a fallen creature! But lo, the distance is done away; and what is so intimately near as a God reconciled, and a fallen creature restored! Jehovah descending in mercy and grace; the soul arising, upborne on the wings of faith and love, must meet and unite, whether on the mount or in the tabernacle; in the temple or the closet. "The secret

of the Lord is with them that fear him: and he will show them his covenant," Psal. xxv. 14. We have heard of Abraham, who was called the *friend* of God; and we behold a communication of the same distinguished honour, to that illustrious son of Abraham who has instructed and blessed mankind by transmitting the history of this sacred friendship to the latest generations of the world. We see it still expressed in the same manner; on the part of Moses by humble submission, holy zeal and importunity, and child-like freedom and confidence; on the part of God, by the most unreserved communication of his intentions, the most endearing expressions of affection and good will.

The history delivered in the preceding chapter of this book exhibited the blessed communion on the mount, suddenly interrupted, by the dreadful scene of madness and rebellion in the plain beneath. Behold all Israel eating and drinking, dancing and playing, before a dumb idol, the similitude of a brute beast. Behold "a covenant with hell" ratified by the same dread solemnities which had been so recently employed, to join a great nation in alliance with the God of heaven. The law which the plastic hand of Omnipotence had impressed on the soul of man in its very constitution; the law which he lately had condescended distinctly to pronounce in the trembling ears of all Israel; that law he had still farther condescended, with exquisite art and skill, by his own finger, to engrave on two tablets of stone, for perpetual preservation. Moses descending in haste, with this precious record in his hand, perceives at a distance the disorder which raged in the camp, and in a transport of indignation, dashes the tablets on the ground, and breaks them in pieces. The motive was good and commendable, but the action was rash and presumptuous. We find, however, no expression of anger against that rashness; the frailty is lost and overlooked in appro-

bation of the principle which led to it. But had not Moses punishment sufficient for his hasty conduct, in the irreparable loss occasioned by it, to himself and to the world? There was no occasion to chide him; his own conscience must have smitten him sufficiently, as often as he reflected on what, in the moment of impatience, he had done.

Without inflicting a positive chastisement, a righteous God can easily reprove men by making them to feel the native consequences of their own folly, and of all the infirmities to which our nature is subject, anger most certainly and most severely punishes itself.

The man who is thus animated with zeal for the glory of God, has forgotten what fear is. Aaron, under the influence of the fear of man, yielded to the popular frenzy, and fabricated the golden calf; Moses, inspired with the fear of God, defies and despises the multitude, consumes their idol in the fire, and grinds it to powder. This is that Moses of whom they talked so contemptuously a little while ago. What, not one of the thousands of Israel who worshipped the image of the beast bold enough to protect his Dagon? No: abashed they stand, and feel "how awful goodness is, and see virtue in her own shape how lovely."

A most remarkable circumstance is added to the history of the destruction of the idol, which has greatly exercised the ingenuity, learning and imagination of critics and commentators. Moses took the dust into which he had pounded the calf, and "strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it," Verse 20. This seems nothing more than an expression of sovereign contempt, poured upon a most worthless object: and a practical demonstration of the absurdity of idolatry. And it may, perhaps not unwarrantably, be employed as a reproof of the inordinate love of money, that root of all evil. Gold as an instrument of commerce, as the means of procuring the things that are needful for the body, as a natural produc-

tion possessed of very singular qualities, may be lawfully sought after and innocently used; but erected into a deity, valued on its own account, swallowing up every other object, engrossing the whole heart, becomes unprofitable and pernicious, as incapable of gratifying the real appetites of a rational being, as gold in its simple state is incapable of satisfying hunger, or, mingled with water, of allaying thirst.

An imagination perpetually on the stretch to discover evangelical ideas in every iota of the sacred history, has perceived the method of gospel salvation, in this passage of Moses; as if the prophet intended to signify that the Messiah, typified by the water which issued from the rock in Horeb, could alone purify from the guilt of idolatry, and from all other sin.

Moses having executed just vengeance on the idol itself, turns in holy indignation to his weak and guilty brother, who had so readily fallen into and abetted so gross a deviation from all duty and decency. "And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?" Verse 21. An anticipated instance of obedience to the apostolic injunction, "Thou shalt not suffer sin upon thy brother, but in any ways reprove him." Justice on the tribunal, knows not a brother in court, but examines the cause. Justice, with the pen of the historian in his hand, knows not blood in recording facts, but declares the truth. Justice, as the minister of God, must stifle the calls of natural affection, and condemn the guilty. And here again Moses becomes a pattern to all judges and magistrates, to every minister of religion, and every relater of events. His own fault, and those of his nearest relations, are told with the same artless simplicity, as their good qualities and praise-worthy actions. Praise and censure are distributed, with the same candour and impartiality, to his own family and to strangers.

Aaron, formerly an object of condemnation, now

sinks into an object of pity; as every man must, in the day when he is called to account, and has no defence to make. “And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf,” Verses 22, 23, 24. Alas, alas! What a profusion of words is guilt constrained to employ in order to cover what it cannot extenuate or excuse. What must it be to behold a guilty world stand self-condemned before the Judge of the quick and the dead! How dreadful must it be, to appear in the number of that guilty crowd, without being able to escape unnoticed in the crowd!

The scene that follows is one of those from which we turn away our eyes in anguish, or which we contemplate in silent horror and astonishment—Thousands of criminals falling at once by the hands of their brethren! The sons of Levi, destined to shed the blood of many victims, to make atonement for the guilty—called to the dreadful ministry of offering up part of the guilty themselves, a sacrifice to justice, to make atonement for the rest! Mark how the courage of one man has roused that of many. A whole tribe has fortitude sufficient to follow in a cause, wherein not one man was found daring enough to profess himself a leader. This is one motive, among many, to aim at being singularly good. Mark the timidity of conscious guilt. Levi was the least numerous of all the tribes; but engaged in the cause of God and truth, the myriads of offending Israelites shrink from their attack, or fall down before them. Mark how dreadful is the brow of justice roused to vengeance. “Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord, even every man

upon his son, and upon his brother, that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day," Verse 29. What a night of horror and remorse must have succeeded a day of impiety, madness and slaughter! What an awful to-morrow, the day of reckoning, to follow that dismal night!

But the case, though dangerous, is not desperate, while there is a Moses to intercede. Has my offended Father so much tenderness left, as to upbraid, to reprove, to chastise me? His displeasure, though depressing, is not intolerable; but silent anger, resentment that neglects, that shuns, that leaves me to myself, is a burthen too heavy for me to bear. If God vouchsafe to speak to me, though in thunder; to answer me, though from the whirlwind; there is hope concerning me. But if he say within himself, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone," then I am indeed lost and undone.

The intercession of Moses, in behalf of the people, now assumes a tone peculiarly earnest and affecting. "And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin: and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written," Verses 31, 32. It is hardly credible that, on this passage, a system of piety has been built so refined as to issue in absurdity and contradiction. Moses is here supposed, by interpreters of a certain complexion, to express the utmost readiness to renounce his eternal salvation for what he apprehended to be the greater glory of God, and if it could be the condition of procuring salvation to Israel. Resignation to the divine will, according to them, is imperfect, till a man can cheerfully and deliberately prefer his own everlasting damnation to all the joys of heaven, if the higher interests of public good, and the glory of God can be thereby promoted. This, to some visionary minds, may have a specious appearance of

a more sublime piety: but it is both unnatural and unscriptural; and therefore is not piety at all. As it is fallen in my way, and as this text in Moses has been connected with a famous passage in the New Testament of similar import, I will take the liberty to speak at some length, and with much plainness, upon the subject; it being a principal object in the plan of these Lectures, to unfold and recommend the religion of the Bible; that is, the religion of good sense, to the neglect of all human systems, and all useless speculations, which have not an obvious foundation in scripture and reason, and which do not obviously tend to promote human virtue and happiness.

Now, we hesitate not a moment to affirm, that the doctrine attempted to be built on the united texts of Moses and of Paul, has not the foundation of the prophet and of the apostle to rest upon; and that it is not calculated to serve any one purpose of religion, wisdom or virtue. The passage in the New Testament alluded to, is that of the great apostle of the Gentiles, and runs thus, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh," Rom. ix. 3. It is too well known to need any proof, that there are in every language, and among all nations of the world, certain modes of expression in common use, which it were unfair to interpret according to the literal import of the words, and which accordingly, if translated into a foreign language, and applied to the modes of thought and expression used in a different age and country, might convey a meaning very different from the original one, perhaps diametrically opposite to it. Is there a man in his senses, who will pretend to assert that Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, one thousand five hundred and fifty years before Christ, affixed the same idea to these words, "Blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written," Verse 32,

which a dogmatical maker of systems in France or England in the eighteenth century thinks proper to affix to them? Is it a certain point that the apostle Paul and such an one, mean precisely the same thing, when the former writes "anathema," and the latter, in the phraseology of his own language, thinks fit to render it by the word "accursed?" In truth, both expressions evidently are figurative, and can be fully understood only by appealing to the genius of the original languages, the spirit of the men who use them, and the occasion on which they are employed. Moses, in a moment, explains what he understands by "the book which God had written." For what saith the answer of God to this expostulation? "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book," Verse 33. And what saith the history? "All that generation died in the wilderness," without being admitted into the land of promise, according to the original destination of Providence, or as it was "written in God's book." Follow Moses to a similar situation on another occasion, and see how he expresses himself; and let the one passage explain the other. The people became discontented with their food at Tabera, and lusted for the provision of Egypt; God was displeased, and threatened to consume them, Moses, grieved in spirit, thus presumes to expostulate. "And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, (as a nursing-father beareth the suckling child) unto the land which thou swearest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me,

kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness," Numb. xi. 11—15. The expression, "Kill me out of hand," is plainly equivalent to that used in Exodus, "Blot me out of the book which thou hast written." What then is the fair meaning and construction of the words of Moses? "Lord, grant the pardon of this people to the prayers of thy servant; who would rather submit to everlasting misery than fail to obtain his request?" Horrid, blasphemous, absurd! No, but nature, piety and patriotism unite in saying as he does, "Lord, if thy decree against this people may not be reversed, if justice demand their utter extermination, let my eyes be first closed in peace. Subject me not to the cruel mortification of surviving all my nation, and of enduring the insults and scorn of our enemies. In mercy take me first out of the world, where I should only lead a life of sorrow and regret, heavier than death itself." The word *anathema* used by the apostle is of the same import with the Hebrew word תִּרְבָּה. They both denote a person or thing devoted, separated by a vow or curse, one excommunicated and separated from society. And his meaning is this, "I most solemnly protest; God and my own conscience are my witnesses, that I speak the truth as it is in my heart; the infidelity of my countrymen after the flesh, is a matter of the deepest concern and regret to me; to such a degree, that if it could be the means of curing their prejudices, and bringing them to Christ the Redeemer, I care not in what estimation I might be held in the church. Let me cease to be an apostle, let me be as one cut off from the society of the faithful, for some atrocious crime; let me be vile and contemptible in the eyes of the world; let but the Israel of God be gathered to the Redeemer, and brought within the bond of the covenant of grace." Moreover, Paul does not directly form even this wish; but conditionally, "I could wish," were it lawful for me to

from such a wish, and if the granting it could any way contribute to the accomplishment of a purpose so desirable.

The sentiment, then, of those mystics, has no warrant either in the language or in the spirit of any of the persons whom God has proposed to us as patterns in scripture.

Besides their being unscriptural, what can be more extravagant and unnatural, than those ranting expressions of one of that order? * “ Though I were sure of being condemned to hell, I would not cease from my penitential acts, and from depriving myself of all comforts for the love of God. If I am to be cast into hell, O my God stay no longer, make haste, and since thou hast forsaken me, finish thy work, precipitate me into the bottomless pit.” Catharine of Sienna thinks fit to express herself thus on the same subject: “ Though it were possible to feel all the torments of devils and damned souls, yet should I never call them pains, so much pleasure would the pure love of God make me to find therein.” These are evidently the idle speculations of persons too much at their ease, whom one hour of exquisite torment would bring to their senses, and teach a sounder divinity. What is the foundation of our love to God? His love to us; the good which he has done to us, that which we still expect from him. I feel it impossible for me to love one, whose interest or caprice require that I should be tormented everlastingly. I love the Lord because he hath delivered me from the curse of the law; because he hath saved me from going down to the pit; because he “ hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” Eph. ii. 6.

Moses by entreaty obtains a short reprieve for the offenders; but a plain intimation is given that they should not pass wholly unpunished. “ In the day

* Angèle de Foligni. Evêque de Meaux Instruct. Pastor. Page 341.

when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them," Verse 34. The meaning of this threatening is fully explained in the sequel. All that generation of men were blotted out of the book of the living; their carcasses fell gradually in the wilderness: they were not permitted to see the good land promised to their fathers; plague upon plague overtook them, till they were consumed for their idolatry; of the worshippers of the golden calf not one entered into Canaan.

God had hitherto condescended to conduct and defend Israel, in that wonderful symbol of his presence, the pillar of cloud and fire. Provoked by their rebellion, their Protector and Guide withdraws from them, and they are left to pursue their march, through paths of their own choosing. The adage says, "Whom God means to destroy, he first infatuates." Had it run more simply, "Whom God means to destroy, he first forsakes," it had been juster and more consonant to the tenor of scripture. When Jehovah has withdrawn as a friend, he is not far off as an enemy. But what must it have been to one who felt like Moses, to be commanded to proceed to the conquest of Canaan, destitute of the presence and support of God, the glory and the strength of Israel? It was like sending a ship into a tempestuous ocean, without ballast, without a mast or sail, without a rudder or compass, to be driven at the mercy of every blast; and laid under the necessity of sinking in the mighty deep. Moses apprehends the full extent of an attempt so perilous, and deprecates it with all the energy of supplication. He apprehends no ill, save one, that of being deserted of God. He trembles at no foe, but their best friend estranged.

The wretched multitude now see their nakedness, and are ashamed. In vain do gold and jewels attempt to hide the deformity of a soul that has lost its innocence. They were not more eager, the other day, to contribute their ornaments to the formation of an idol, than they are now to hide them out of sight, as the mon-

uments of their dishonour. “What fruit have they now in those things whereof they are ashamed?” A face of mourning is seen over the whole camp, and every face is clothed with despair. Direction is given to remove the tabernacle without the camp. A few who had continued faithful, adhere to that divine instrument of protection, and follow it. The cloudy pillar, which, during the period of riot, sedition and revolt, had in wrath departed, returned to its destined residence, the tabernacle. In the eyes of astonished Israel, Moses enters undismayed into that mansion of divine glory, proceeds to meet God, as a man to meet his friend; renews the conference in the plain, which had been broken off on the mount. The result is, God graciously relents, being mindful of his covenant, and again undertakes the safe conduct of his people, “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest,” Chap. xxxiii. 14, and all again is peace. And thus conclude the controversies between disobedient and gainsaying children, and their tender-hearted, relenting Father. He is not to be “overcome of evil, but overcomes evil with good.”

But what is this I hear? Moses soliciting for still farther manifestations of the divine perfections? Who had seen, who had heard, who had felt and enjoyed so much of God as he? And yet still he is importunately entreating, “Lord, show me thy glory.” O my friends, how many things of God do “angels still desire to look into?” There is “a breadth, and length, and depth, and height, in the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” The response of the oracle to this request, is not less extraordinary than the request itself. “And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me and live. And the Lord

said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock. And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock; and will cover thee with my hand, while I pass by. And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen." Chap. xxxiii. 19—23. This opens a field of meditation too ample to be now entered upon. Let it be reserved for the entire ground of another evening's excursion into the region of scripture: and let us contemplate with wonder the scene which has just passed before our eyes.

—Does the whole story seem to any one incredible? Let the horrid scene which this great metropolis exhibited not many years ago,* arise upon his recollection. Let him think on the frenzy, which, like a mighty torrent, carried every thing before it; which fired the city, overawed the senate, and threatened the dissolution of all regular government. Who can tell the dire effects which desperate enthusiasm, suddenly bursting out and exciting universal terror and consternation, may produce. Had we not seen it with our eyes, we could scarcely have believed, that consequences so momentous should have issued from a source so contemptible. The resolutions and operations of a lawless multitude are truly formidable. Unopposed, they rush on as an overflowing flood; resisted, they melt away; they are scattered like chaff driven by the wind.

—Observe, O man, how the most difficult lessons of religion, patience, and forbearance, and forgiveness, are taught thee by the example of the great Jehovah himself. Darest thou to think of vengeance for a petty, a misconceived, and imaginary offence, when thou beholdest the most glorious of all beings, passing by, blotting out the most heinous, the most unprovoked insults, and when thou hearest him pro-

* June, 1780.

claiming his name, "the LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin?" "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good," Rom. xii. 19, 20, 21. "I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust," Matt. v. 44, 45.

—"Follow on to know the Lord." Expatriate in nature's ample field, and you will find profit and instruction blended with delight. Explore the wonders of eternal Providence, and you will see constant cause to rejoice in the thought that there is a GOD who judgeth and ruleth in the earth. Dive deeper and deeper into those mysteries of grace which "angels desire to look into," and break forth into songs of joy, that "GOD is love." "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John xvii. 3. Now "we know in part, and we prophecy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away," 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.

Nature now presents in every plant, in every pebble, mysteries that defy the researches of the wisest and most acute; then "the way-faring man, though a fool," shall comprehend systems the vastest, most complex, most abstruse. Providence now exhibits an apparent inconsistency and disorder, which confounds

the reasoning pride of man; then, God will fully vindicate his ways to man, obviate every difficulty, resolve every doubt, remove every scruple. In scripture "are some things hard to be understood," in our present state of ignorance and imperfection; then the veil shall be removed, and "we shall see face to face,"—"then shall we know even as also we are known." Then the promised Spirit of wisdom and revelation "shall teach us all things, and bring all things to our remembrance." Then shall he "open" our "understanding," that we may "understand the scriptures." "Amen, even so, come Lord Jesus!"

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE V.

And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory.

EXODUS xxxiii. 18.

THE greater progress any one has made in science, the deeper must be his conviction of his own ignorance and imperfection; and the higher our attainments in religion, the stronger is the impression of our infinite distance from God. A little knowledge puffeth up; but modesty and humility are the constant attendants on profound wisdom. Thoughtless men make light of the name, the house, the day of God; but angels “cover their faces with their wings,” when they approach his awful presence. Human friendship admits of freedom and familiarity; but while the great Jehovah condescends to “dwell with man upon earth, even with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit;” he permits us not to forget, that he is “the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy.” Are we elevated, as on eagle’s wings, up to the eternal throne? It is only that we may feel the hand which supports our flight, and discern our own darkness by that “light which is inaccessible and full of glory.” Abraham, the friend of God, in the highest intimacy of that honourable character, loses not for a moment the sense of his distance and dependence; “Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes,”

Gen. xviii. 27. "O let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but this once." A voice from heaven reaches his ears, saying, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward," Gen. xv. 1. And that instant we behold him prostrate, with his face to the ground. Moses, the friend of God, to whom Jehovah revealed more of himself than to any other man, is still but in the outer court of the habitation where God dwells. What he knows has only created a thirst for knowledge; what he has seen has but inspired an earnest desire of seeing more and more; and after communications so ample, and communion so sweet, this is still his desire, this his request, "Lord, show me thy glory."

From the reiterated rebellions and provocations of Israel, this good has resulted—New, endearing, encouraging discoveries have been made of the divine nature, perfections and will. Mankind, to the latest generations, have been instructed to revere that justice which "will by no means clear the guilty," and to triumph in that mercy which "forgiveth iniquity, transgression and sin." The revolt of the people cemented and improved the union between God and their leader.

Joshua, the son of Nun, who was destined to make so distinguished a figure, and to act a part so conspicuous and important in the history of Israel, is represented as trained up from his youth in the service of Moses, and in communion with God. We find him in the mount with his master when he went to receive the written law, while the multitude below were polluting themselves with idols. We find him entering with his master into the tabernacle, when it was removed out of the camp, and the glory of the Lord overshadowed it; and there he remained, while Moses returned to confer with the people. Early habits of acquaintance with God, and employment in his service, are youth's best security and preservative against

sin, and the surest foundation of honour and usefulness, of distinction and comfort in advanced age. A man must be formed to command by obeying. "Joshua, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle." Verse 11. What a severe reproof of that spirit of profligacy and dissipation, that criminal love of pleasure and coldness to intellectual attainments, that irreligion and profanity which characterize youth in general?

It is pleasing to look forward to this good man's latter end, and to observe a career of glory supported and adorned by piety; a youth of seriousness, fidelity and usefulness, ripening into an advanced life of reputation and usefulness; declining into an old age of tranquillity, vigour and joy; and closing in the well-grounded hope of immortality. Joshua was trained for the camp, in the tabernacle and on the mount, and was prepared to be the great general and statesman, by learning first to be the humble saint and faithful minister.

The characters of Moses and of Joshua delightfully illustrate and embellish each other. Moses knew from the beginning that this young man was to be his successor in office; was to finish the work which he had begun; was to have the glory of conquering Canaan, and of establishing Israel there, according to the promises. An ordinary mind would have marked the progress of this growing rival with jealousy; would have attempted to obstruct his advancement; would have repined at the preference given him, to the neglect of his own family. But every selfish, every domestic consideration gives way to the rising merits of Joshua, and to the choice and appointment of Heaven. It was equally natural, on the other hand, for a young man like Joshua, who knew that he was destined to rule, to surpass his master, to reach the highest summit of human grandeur; it was natural for such an one to become impatient of authority, to be weary of

restraint, to be eager to bring himself forward, and make himself conspicuous: but the son of Nun discovers true magnanimity in cheerfully yielding the subjection becoming an inferior; in observing Moses and learning of him; in patiently waiting for the time and manner which Providence should choose of exalting him to honour. Moses treats him, and speaks of him, as of a favourite son, rising into eminence and distinction; he behaves to Moses as to a beloved parent, crowned with years and honour, which he hopes to see him long enjoy. These are lessons not taught in the school of the world, where natural affection, decency and discretion are daily sacrificed on the altar of pride, selfishness, avarice and ambition.

Moses has, by importunity, prevailed that the usual symbol of the divine presence should continue to lead and protect Israel, by the way in which they went to the promised land. In answer to the prayer of faith it is thus promised, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest," Verse 14. His Spirit is now therefore tranquillized with respect to the people of his charge. God is yet again "for them, and who can be against them?" But his personal acquaintance with God seems only beginning. As if he had seen nothing of the divine glory in the bush at Horeb, which burned, but was not consumed; as if the awful glories of Sinai had been nothing; as if God had not spoken to him in the tabernacle of the congregation, face to face, "as a man to his friend;" he continues to entreat, "Lord, show me thy Glory!" My friends, if you can rest satisfied with what you know of God, it is a melancholly proof that you know him not. Eternity is too short, the capacity of an angel too limited, "to find out the Almighty unto perfection."

What a field of discovery does the vast frame of NATURE present! Supposing, O man, thy duration sufficiently extended, thy understanding sufficiently enlarged, and opportunity afforded thee, equal to thy ut-

most wish, when couldst thou have made a complete survey of the little globe wherein we dwell; when couldst thou have explored the innumerable secret wonders of the hoary deep; when examined the precious contents of the everlasting hills; when discovered the nature and properties of air and fire? Supposing the mighty task performed; supposing the untried regions of the air, the untrodden paths of the sea, the deep and the high places of the earth rendered accessible to thy approach, laid fully open to thy view—and lo, the race of knowledge is but beginning. Behold another orb at hand, presenting a new world of wonders: an orb possessing an inconceivably greater extent than our earth, containing an infinitely greater variety of objects, answering a much nobler end in the scale of being; and after that, another; and another still, in endless succession. Suppose the whole planetary system, in order, to have passed under review, the mind rests not there; the wonders of divine power and wisdom end not then; the soul wings its way to other systems, lighted by other suns, and finds itself but entering on the glorious career.

Were the whole expanse of nature explored, the MORAL government of God over all these spheres and all that they contain, expands the same vast field afresh to the astonished eye, and invites to a second excursion. When that is performed, REDEEMING LOVE, ALMIGHTY GRACE display the ample theatre a third time, and lead us by the hand through the “nations of them that are saved,” and point out the successive triumphs of sovereign goodness. As if it were possible to see an end of all this glorious perfection, scripture announces the dissolution of all these things, as a space too small for the soul to expatiate in, as an object too mean for its contemplation; and promises a new and more glorious system of things, suited to its endless duration and exalted powers, “new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.” And what is it,

even then, that men behold? The works of God, not God himself; the writing, not the hand that writes; the palace that is inhabited, not the divine inhabitant; the emanation, not the essence of his glory. Every gracious spirit, then, will with Moses be "following on to know the Lord;" still and ever inquiring, still and ever imploring, "Lord, show me thy glory."

The answer of God to this request is not less remarkable than the request itself. Moses prayed, saying, "Lord show me thy glory." Alas, like the disciple on the mount of transfiguration, "he knew not what he said." To have been answered according to the letter of his desire, had been fatal to him; for what created eye can behold the glory of God and live? But a gracious God returns an answer suitable to the condition of his servant. "And he said, I will make all my GOODNESS pass before thee; and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee, and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy," Verse 19. This is the glory of God to man, the riches of his grace, the glory of his goodness, the wonders of his love.

In a display of the most striking imagery, God points out to Moses what was weak, ignorant and presumptuous in his petition, and commends what is pious, dutiful and affectionate. "And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock. And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock; and I will cover thee with my hand, while I pass by. And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen," Verse 20—23. Expressions painly importing, that by creatures such as we are, the great Jehovah can be seen and known only from those tokens of his presence which he leaves behind him. He comes upon us, as it were, imperceptibly,

unveils his glory for a moment, in his word, in his ordinances, but his hand is upon our eyes. As he departs, he permits us to look up, and to know, by infallible marks, that he has been with us. Thus, Jacob's vision at Bethel was over, before he was aware into what glorious company he had been introduced. "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not," Gen. xxviii. 16. Thus at Peniel he wrestled apparently with a man; but in departing, his divine antagonist, by a touch, convinced him who he was; and he discovers, that he had seen "the visions of the Almighty," after he had withdrawn. And thus, the glorified Redeemer talked with the two disciples by the way as they went to Emmaus, and opened unto them the scriptures; while their heart burned within them, but their eyes were held that they did not know him. At length, while he brake bread and blessed it, "their eyes were opened, and they knew him." Is God in this place? We see him not: we cannot see him and live; but by this we shall know it hereafter—Has his word been made quick and powerful to any soul? Has the dignity and importance of communion with him been felt? Is a man departing with a deeper and more humbling sense of his own unworthiness and guilt; and penetrated with a more lively apprehension of the mercy of God through a Saviour? Is sin rendered more odious, and holiness more amiable in the eyes of any one? Is the heart glowing with desire to know more of God, to love him more, and serve him better? Is the spirit of a man pressing "toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus?" Phill. iii. 14. Then of a truth God is in this place; and a day spent thus in his courts, is better than a thousand.

But how is the language of this concluding passage of the chapter reconciled with that in the eleventh verse? "The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as

a man speaketh unto his friend." The expression, "to see the face," is evidently taken into two different senses. In the 11th verse, it signifies to be regarded with favour or approbation, as it is in the 4th Psalm, verse 6, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us;" that is, show thyself gracious unto us, for we prize thy loving kindness far above every earthly blessing: but in the 20th and 23d verse, "to see the face of God," imports the knowledge of his nature or essence, which to a creature is impossible. Here even a Moses is in darkness, through an excess of light; into this angels desire to look, but instantly shrink back, and shut their trembling eyes. "But the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," John i. 18; and "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth," John i. 14. Such was the care employed by Him who knows what is in man, to prevent the possibility of idolatry, and to expose the folly of it. Even Moses shall not be trusted with any thing like a representation of Deity; and what so absurd as to frame a similitude of what never was, never can be seen?

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," says the apostle James; and what a notable instance have we of the truth of this in the passage before us! Moses rises in his demands, as he succeeds by supplicating, and he still prevails. First, he pleads that the presence of God, the light and glory of Israel, might not be withdrawn, as was threatened, but might accompany and lead them to their destined habitation. And lo! God grants his request, with an assurance of peculiar regard and affection to himself, "Thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name," verse 17. Upon this he presumes to ask some new, some special manifestation of the divine glory, for his own satisfaction.

and comfort. This too he obtains, in a promise that the goodness of God, ALL his goodness should be made to pass before him. Emboldened by this success, he cannot rest till he has obtained for the people a remission of their offence. And he said, "If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go amongst us, (for it is a stiff-necked people) and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance," Chap. xxxiv. 9. And behold he carries this point also, and the covenant is renewed between God and Israel. Let us see that our requests be proper to be granted, and we have them already, before we make them. Let us be solicitous to obtain spiritual blessings in the first place, and the temporal good things which we prize not, asked not, may perhaps come unexpected, unsought. "Give thy servant," said Solomon, "an understanding heart, that I may discern between good and bad." "And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment: behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee, all thy days," 1 Kings iii. 10—13.

To enjoy this heavenly vision of *all* God's goodness, as it passed by, Moses must again ascend the mount, and draw nigh unto God. He was going up as to meet a friend; but that almighty friend must protect him from himself, as from his most formidable enemy. "While my glory passeth by, I will put thee in a cleft of the rock; and will cover thee with my hand while

I pass by," Verse 22. An inspired apostle tells us that "this rock was Christ," 1 Cor. x. 4. And it sheds a pleasing light on the subject. What afforded safety to Moses in the tremendous hour, when the glory of God appeared? A cleft of that rock from whence the living stream issued forth for the refreshment of God's heritage when it was weary, and which was the type of that wonderful "*Man*" who is an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as a shadow of a great rock in a weary land," Isaiah xxxii. 2. Did Moses flee thither for shelter, did he foresee his danger, and provide a covering for his defenceless head? No: the refuge was of God's providing. "I will put thee in a cleft of the rock." Not human sagacity, but divine mercy discovers, and prepares a retreat for the miserable. Observe the solid foundation on which that man is established who rests on the word of God; "thou shalt stand upon a rock." Remove the promise of him who is faithful, of him who is true, and we immediately sink into an horrible pit, and stick fast in the miry clay; but "Behold," says God, "I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste," Isaiah xxviii. 16.

Moses is now directed to make all needful preparation for this important visit. In his haste he had thrown the two tables, which contained the law, on the ground, and had broken them in pieces under the mount: but no act of man can disannul the law of God. The loss, though great, was not irreparable. But God will not entirely repair it, that Moses may have somewhat to regret in the effects of his impatience. The former two tables were wholly of God—the substance, the form, the writing, the subject; but the last must partake of human ignorance and imperfection. The choice of the stone, and the hewing it into form, are of Moses; the writing and the words

are still of God. And these were the tables which were laid up in the ark of the testimony for preservation, and were transmitted to posterity. And it is thus that the precious things of God are still conveyed to men. The casket is human, the jewel which it contains is divine. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us," 2 Cor. iv. 7. And thus though a merciful God express not displeasure at our rashness and folly, they become in the end their own punishment.

Moses is commanded to be ready in the morning. The operations of human state loiter and linger, and seek to acquire importance from expectation and delay; but the movements of Deity prevent the dawning, and derive all their importance from themselves. Unless prayer be followed out by vigour and exertion, men pray in vain. One hour lost in slumber had rendered ten thousand petitions fruitless and ineffectual: but Moses, like a man in earnest, like a man who knew the valour of what he had so ardently desired, is ready betimes; he is at the appointed place at the appointed hour; with the tablets prepared to receive the impress of God. He carried them with him, a dead, vacant, useless lump of stone; he brings them back turned into spirit and life, clothed with meaning, speaking to the eye, to the heart, to the conscience; for if God breathe on dry bones, they instantly live, and stand up a great army.

If we can conceive a situation more awfully solemn than another, it was that of Moses on this occasion. Consider the stillness of the morning, the elevation of the mountain, the pleasing gloom of solitude, the expected display of a glory which he could not behold but as it departed. Every circumstance is great and affecting, but altogether suitable to the glory that followed: for "the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the

Lord," Chap. xxxiv. 5. At the inauguration of kings it is customary to proclaim their name and titles, and to bid defiance to every challenger or usurper of their rights. This is the mere pride of state, the mere insolence of possession. But the names of God are his nature; peculiar to himself, inapplicable, incommunicable to any other. And mark how the tide of mercy flows and swells till it has overcome every barrier; from "the soles of the feet to the ancles, from the ancles to the knees, till it becomes a river, wherein a man may swim;" and from an overflowing river converted into a boundless ocean, without bottom, without shore. "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin," Chap. xxxiv. 6, 7. While justice is confined in one steady, deep, awful stream, threatening destruction only to the impenitent and unbelieving; expressed in these awful words, "and that will by no means clear the guilty."

This was the commencement of an interview "which lasted forty days and forty nights," and which contained a repetition of the instructions formerly given respecting the tabernacle and its service. But this merits a separate and distinct consideration; as likewise does the alteration of the external appearance of Moses, on coming down from the mount; of which we mean to discourse next Lord's day. "Moses wist not that the shin of his face shone, while he talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come nigh him," Chap. xxxiv. 29, 30.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE VI.

*And it came to pass when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount) that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone, while he talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come nigh him.—*EXODUS xxxiv. 29, 30.

THE sun, the great light of the natural world, communicates to all bodies a portion of his own splendour, and thereby confers upon them whatever lustre they possess. In his absence, all things assume the same dismal sable hue. The verdure of the meadow; the varied glory of the garden; the brightness of the moon's resplendent orb; the sweet attractions of "the human face divine," pronounce in so many different forms of expression, "The light of yonder celestial globe has arisen upon me: If I have any beauty or loveliness, with him it comes, and with him it departs." The whole order and system of nature is designed to be a constant witness to the God of grace—"the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world." If there be in angels any beauty of holiness, any fervour of love, any elevation of wisdom, any excellency of strength; if there be in man any bowels of mercies, any kindness of affection, any gen-

tleness of spirit, any endearment of charity, any humbleness of mind, any meekness, patience, long-suffering, it is a glory reflected from "the Father of lights." It neither exists nor can be seen, but as it is supplied and discovered by the eternal Source of light and joy. Say to that tulip, at the gloomy solstice of the year, or at the dusky midnight hour, "Array thyself in all those beautiful tints of thine wherewith thou charimest the eye of every beholder;" it hears thee not, it exhibits no colour but one. But with the return of the vernal breeze, and the genial influence of the sun, and the moment the dawning has arisen upon it, unbidden, unobserved, it puts on its beautiful garments, and stands instantly clothed in all the freshness of the spring. Why is that face clouded with sorrow, why grovels that spirit in the dust, why lacks that heart the glow of benevolence, the meltings of sympathy? The genial current of the soul is frozen up, it is the dreary winter season of grace. The sun, the sun of righteousness has withdrawn; but, lo, after a little while, the winter is past, cheerful spring returns, the voice of joy and gladness is heard, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee," Isaiah lx. 1.

We naturally assume the tone of those with whom we frequently converse, and whom we dearly love. "He who walketh with wise men shall become wise; but the companion of fools shall be destroyed." At the social, friendly banquet, the eye sparkles with delight, the heart expands, the brow is smoothed, the tongue is inspired by the law of kindness; every look is the reception or communication of pleasure. In the house of mourning, we speedily feel ourselves in unison with the afflicted; our eyes stand corrected, our words are few, our heads droop. In the cell of melancholy, the blood runs cold, the features relax, our powers of thought and reflection are suspended, with those of the moping wretches whose misery we

deplore. What wonder then if Moses descending from the mount, after forty days familiar intercourse with "the Lord God, merciful and gracious," had not the appearance of an ordinary man; that he had acquired a lustre not his own! "He was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread nor drink water," Chap. xxxiv. 28.

What a sublime idea does this suggest of communion with God! What created enjoyment has not lost its relish in a much shorter space! What powers of unassisted nature could have so long sustained the want of aliment! No one thing in a more humiliating manner teaches us our frailty and dependence, than the constant necessity of recurring to the grosser elements for support. Man, the lord of this lower world, must with the subject tribes, and in a much greater proportion than many of them, pass a very considerable portion of his existence in a state of unconsciousness and insensibility during the hours of sleep; he must purchase with the suspension of his reason, during a third part of his being, the exercise of it during the other two. The happiness of an immortal being is, oftener than once in a day, subjected to a little bread that perisheth; the spirit, however willing, quickly feels the oppressive weight of a body frail and infirm. But behold the triumph of the spirit over the flesh; or rather, the power and grace of God, which, vouchsafing in general to employ means, call upon us diligently to use them; but which sometimes neglecting these and conveying immediate supplies and support, lead us at once to Him "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

Moses descends, not with impaired, but with recruited strength; strength, which, to the end of life, never more abated: not with a sunk, darkened, extinguished eye; but an eye, which, having seen God, never afterwards became dim: not with a visage pale and emaciated from a fast of forty days; but with a

countenance that dazzled the eyes of every beholder. What a glorious creature is the friend of God! “Lo, O Lord, they that are far from thee shall perish, but it is good for me to draw nigh unto God.” When Moses descended before, he was clothed in just resentment and displeasure; he came a minister of vengeance, and all Israel trembled as he frowned; he now returns with the covenant renewed, the tables of the law restored, a messenger of peace, and yet the lustre of his appearance is intolerable. What must the great JEHOVAH be in his own glory, when reflected, imparted glory—glory communicated to a creature, thus intimidates and astonishes! How dreadful the glory of wrath and fiery indignation, when the glory of infinite goodness we are not able steadfastly to behold!

Moses descended the first time, with the tables in their original state, altogether of God; and in his haste he effaced and destroyed them: but we read of no attempt to collect the scattered fragments, and to re-unite them. Superstition might have made an improper use of what could not be distinctly read, and, of consequence, but partially understood; and true piety will seek some surer rule of faith and conduct, some more powerful assistant in devotion than the scattered shivers of even a sapphire from the throne of God. It has been wofully demonstrated to be an easy matter to mar the work of God. Adam defaced the divine image in his own person, by one wilful transgression. Moses cancelled the hand writing of ordinances, in one rash moment: and every thoughtless transgressor is pulling down, in his own person, a fabric of God’s rearing. But all the powers of nature united, are incapable of rebuilding that temple, of renewing that writing, of restoring that image. He who in the beginning “commanded light to shine out of darkness,” alone can relumine the extinguished life of God in the soul. The hand which at first created

man out of "the dust of the ground," alone can form of the dead in trespasses and sins, "a new creature in Christ Jesus unto good works." And what was afterwards laid up in the holy place, and preserved while the tabernacle remained? Not that which came pure and perfect from the hands of the Creator, but that which God, by an act of grace and the intervention of a Mediator, recovered. Thus "the general assembly and church of the first-born written in heaven," is not composed of men that never "left their first estate," but of "just men *made* perfect;" not of creatures like Adam, in a state of innocence, but of creatures redeemed by the blood of the Son of God; "justified by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," and sanctified by the Spirit of the living God. Let us not, then, regret the loss of an earthly paradise, nor the destruction of the image of a changeable, though perfect creature, while, through grace, we may regain the paradise of God, and be fashioned in body and spirit like unto our glorious Redeemer.

Moses has acquired a glory, on the mount, which he is not conscious of. "He wist not that the skin of his face shone, while he talked with him," verse 29. The choicest of God's gifts, and humility is one of the most precious, come not with observation, announce not their approach, are not first visible to the possessor. But it is impossible to converse much with God, without appearing more glorious in the eyes of men. Has a man been in the mount with God? He needeth not to sound a trumpet before him, to proclaim from whence he has come; he has but to show himself, and the evidence of it will appear. That man has been in the mount with God. What are the signs of it? Is he ostentatious, self-sufficient? Is he eager to talk of his attainments, to exhibit the shining of his face, to abash and confound a less favoured brother? He is not like Moses, he has not been with the God of Moses, his pretensions are vain. That man has been in the

mount with God. How does it appear? Is he gloomy and sullen, harsh and uncharitable? Is his tongue filled with anathemas? Flashes his eye destruction on mankind? He is a liar and an impostor, believe him not; he is not come down from the God of the law, from the God of the gospel, from the relenting Father of Israel, from the compassionate Father of the human race: No: he has been conversing with, he has ascended from the malignant enemy of God and man: by his spirit you may know who he is.

Pretenders are at as much pains to display the lustre of their outside, as Moses was to conceal his. By this then you shall try and know yourselves, and form your judgment of others. Does a man issue forth from his closet, return from the temple, retire from the Lord's table, with his temper sweetened, his heart enlarged, with the law of kindness on his tongue, with the tear of compassion, or the luster of benevolence in his eye? Is he, like Moses, more attentive to the condition, necessities and instruction of others, than earnest to blaze abroad his own excellencies, in order to obtain reputation for himself? How gloriously does such an one shine in the eyes of men: but that is nothing, how gloriously does he shine in the eyes of God! And that is true glory which God sees to be such.

“The face of Moses shone and they were afraid to come nigh him,” Verse 30. Of what importance is it to inquire, at what particular moment, and through what peculiar medium, this singular appearance was produced? Is it not sufficient for me, that I see the fruit hastening to its maturity, though the commencement and progress of vegetation escape me? I look up and “behold the face of the sun,” and draw comfort from his beams, though the discriminating instant of darkness and the dawning was too fine for my perception. Let me be able to say, with the man restored to sight, “One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see,” John ix. 25—and I shall leave to

others a minute inquiry into the process of the cure. Show me a man shining in the beauty of holiness; a man really changed in heart and in life, and I will not trouble him to tell me, what perhaps he does not know, and therefore cannot declare—at what place, by means of what preacher, or by what dispensation of Providence, the important change passed upon him.

A truly good man is among the first to discover, to acknowledge and to correct his own errors and imperfections; but humility spreads the veil which conceals his good qualities first over his own eyes, and is among the last to discern the splendor which confounds others. What a powerful charm is there in undissembled goodness, when the wicked themselves are constrained to venerate and to approve it, even while it condemns them.

Besides the instance in the text, scripture has furnished us with at least another, and a most illustrious one in the history of Stephen, the first martyr to christianity, after its divine Author. An enraged multitude, blood-thirsty accusers and a partial tribunal feel themselves awed into a temporary reverence; their fury stands suspended while they behold him. “All that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel,” Acts vi. 15. But there is a greater than even this upon record. The band which broke into the garden, with their officers, under the commission of the chief priests, and headed by the traitor, to apprehend Jesus of Nazareth, were so struck with an inexpressible something in his presence and address, “that they went backward and fell to the ground,” John xviii. 6.

But what made Israel to shrink from the presence of their gracious leader, intercessor and friend? What could render the presence of his affectionate brother formidable to Aaron? That which drove the first transgressor to “hide himself from the presence of the Lord God.” It is conscience that makes cowards of all men;

it is conscience that converts the rustling of a leaf, the shaking of a bulrush, into a spectre from the grave, or a flaming minister from heaven to execute vengeance. Under the awful terrors of divine glory, they had lately entreated, saying, "Let Moses speak to us, and we will hear;" but now, even the look of Moses, though he say nothing, is too much for a guilty people to bear. Alas, how little do men reflect, when engaged in criminal pursuits, that the pleasures of sin in which they riot, are one day to become hidden ghosts to disturb their repose, to scare the imagination, to harrow up the soul, to accuse them at the tribunal of God, to be their tormentors for ever.

Moses, conscious of good will to all, exulting in the thought of having procured pardon and reconciliation for them, but unconscious of the change which had passed upon his own person, observes with concern and surprise that every one avoided him. At length he discovers the brightness of his own countenance reflected from their guilty, blushing foreheads; and by words of kindness encourages them to return, whom the terror of his looks had dismayed and put to flight. We then find him, with the condescension of true goodness, accommodating himself to the circumstances of the people whom he was appointed to instruct. Intercourse with Heaven has raised *him* to a higher pitch of exaltation; guilt and fear have degraded *them*: but love levels the mountains, and fills up the vallies of separation. The interposition of a veil reduces him to their standard, because the confidence of innocence raised them not to his. The law of God must be taught to the people though the teacher is become more glorious. This is a plain and striking lesson to all who undertake to instruct others. It is a wretched ambition merely to shine. The great aim of a teacher should be to communicate knowledge; and he shows himself to be possessed of most, who knows best how to convey it to others. He is the truly rich

man, who, by the proper use of his wealth, assists in making many rich; not he who possesses a vast hoard which he knows not how to enjoy; nor he who makes an ostentatious display of riches, merely to insult his poorer neighbour. And he who speaks three words in a known language, to the edification of the hearer, has more real learning than the babbler of ten thousand, in a language which no one understands.

“Till he had done speaking,” then, “Moses put a veil on his face,” Verse 33; so that the sound of his voice might be heard, while the terrifying lustre of his face was obscured. But this was not merely an incidental circumstance, arising out of the occasion, and done away with it; but was designed, in providence, to be a symbolical representation of the whole Mosaic dispensation; which was nothing else but the gospel under a veil. That this is not a fanciful conjecture, we appeal to the great apostle of the Gentiles, who has removed the veil, and discovered the hidden glory which lies under it, and thus writes, “Not that *we*,” meaning the apostles of the Lord Jesus under the New Testament, “not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious, had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech. And not as Moses;

which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished. But their minds were blinded; for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away, in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day when Moses is read, the veil is upon the heart. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away," 2 Cor. iii. 5—16.

From the days of Moses down to those of Paul, and by Paul himself, in the days of his ignorance, Moses was heard and read with the veil over his face; was understood in the letter, not in the spirit; and even after the veil was done away in Christ, who is "the end of the law for righteousness;" after the types were explained, the predictions accomplished, and the great prophet of the Jews had brought all his glory, and laid it at the feet of the great Apostle and High Priest of our profession, still the people who had the best means of information, who had the power of comparing spiritual things with spiritual, read them, and continue to read them to this day, under the power of passion and prejudice. And he who sees in Moses, and the other writings of the Old Testament, nothing but the histories of certain events long since past, and confined in their operation and effect to a particular district; nothing but the religious usages and ceremonies practised by a particular people, that man looks with a bandage upon his eyes, understands not what he reads, and therefore cannot profit.

There is a gracious intimation in the passage we have just now quoted, that a period is approaching when Israel too shall turn unto the Lord; when the veil shall be taken away, and Moses in whom they trusted, shall be seen without a covering; and "if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" Rom. xi. 15.

What glorious views of God, of his providence, of his grace, does the gospel disclose! The Gentile nations behold their admission into the family of God, and their privileges, as his children, in the promises which were made to Abraham and his seed. And the Jews will in time discover the intention and design of their political and religious establishment, in the nature, duration and extent of the Redeemer's kingdom: when Israel also shall be saved; as it is written, "There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob," Rom. xi. 26.

Human frailty rendered the interposition of a veil necessary between Moses and the people; because, "they could not look steadfastly to the end of that which is abolished;" but when Moses went into the tabernacle, to converse with God, a veil to cover his face being unnecessary, it was laid aside.

It is natural to hold out our most favourable appearance to men, to catch at their good opinion, to secure their approbation; but we see in Moses a mind intent only upon usefulness. He joyfully gives up a little fame, for the sake of doing much good. If the church of God be enlightened, what is it to him that he himself is a little obscured? His lustre is to illuminate Israel. Vain glory always defeats the purpose which it had formed; humility as certainly gains the point at which it aimed not. Who does not esteem Moses, modestly shrouded in a veil, infinitely more than all the loquacious boasters and exhibitors of themselves that ever existed? Moses, in talking with the people, employed a veil, not as a mask to insinuate a false idea of what he was not, but to conceal the real excellency which he had; unlike the hypocrisy and disguise of the world; and, to use disguise with God he knew would be impious, profane and unavailing. We find him changing his appearance, as the occasion required. This was not, in him, versatility and address, a cunning accommodation to circumstances for selfish ends;

but the compliance of wisdom and necessity, in order to be more extensively useful. Thus Paul “became all things to all men, that he might gain some.” And, for the same reason, a greater than Moses, a greater than Paul, disdained not the festivity of a marriage solemnity; refused not the invitation of one ruler, nor rejected the visit of another; abhorred not to eat with publicans and sinners, if by any means the ignorant might be instructed, the proud and selfish checked and reprov'd, the modest encouraged, and the mourner comforted.

At the first descent of Moses from the mount, we see the glory of a man zealous for God: at his second, the glory of a man owned and honoured of God; “the skin of his face shining.” But at his appearance many days afterwards on Tabor, we behold a saint from the world of bliss, altogether glorious. Such is the blessed effect of being with God and “seeing him as he is,” not for forty days only, but during a series of ages. And what must it then be, to “be ever with the Lord,” to glorify God, and to be glorified of him “in body and spirit which are the Lord’s?” And why was Moses again exhibited on the mount of transfiguration? Wherefore again displayed in glory? Again to put a veil upon his face, to empty himself, and to deposit his glory at the feet of Him in whose light and likeness he shone—To talk with Jesus “concerning the decease he should accomplish at Jerusalem.”

The Jewish Rabbins pretend to account for the unabated vigour, the unfading lustre of the latter years of the life of Moses, from these very circumstances. The eye, say they, which had endured the sight of God, could not become dim: the natural strength which supported a fast of forty days, could not sink under any future decay.

—Christian, consider Moses, the man of God, invested with lustre which dazzled the eye of every beholder, and which length of time could not impair, and reflect, to what a glory communion with God can raise

a fallen creature; and aspire after a participation of that grace which adorned him. The glory of his person was a rare and singular attainment; but that of his spirit may be imitated and attained by all. His piety, resignation and obedience; his meekness, gentleness and compassion, present amiable patterns, and they are the ornaments suited to your present state. It is given but to a favoured few to exhibit heroic virtue, to perform splendid actions, to acquire extensive reputation; but none is excluded from the honour of simple modest worth, of habitual beneficence, of honest fame. And those are the most valuable and solid acquisitions, which “are in the sight of God of great price.”

—Steady and persevering intercourse with Heaven will infallibly transform the whole man into the image of God. The very exterior will be meliorated and improved, and the world itself will “take knowledge” of the disciple who “has been with Jesus.” The exercises of the closet will be seen and felt in the serenity of the countenance, the kindness of the eye, the melody of the voice, the affability and graciousness of the whole deportment. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,” Matt. v. 16.

—The time is at hand when the glory which irradiated the face of Moses shall be imparted to the whole company of the redeemed; when the name of God and the Lamb shall shine in every forehead. Behold, and wonder, behold, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God, “A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars,” Rev. xii. 1. “They that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever,” Daniel xii. 3. “The *Lord* God is a sun and shield: the *Lord* will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly,” Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE VII.

According to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel made all the work. And Moses did look upon all the work, and behold, they had done it as the Lord had commanded, even so had they done it: And Moses blessed them.—EXODUS xxxix. 42, 43.

IF reason were to maintain its full dominion in man, were the senses perpetually under the control of the mind, a motive to religion would be continually supplied from the natural impulse of a grateful and affectionate heart. The vast universe would become one great temple; every pebble, every plant, every star would be a witness for God; and the heaven-born spirit would arise on the wing of every bird, of every breeze of air, to its glorious Author. But man, degraded by sin, blinded by passion, involved in error; man, impaired in understanding, grovelling in affection, in captivity to sense, needs to be frequently admonished of his obligation to, and dependence upon God, his Creator and Preserver. He needs forms, and seasons, and places of worship; the heart must be approached through the channels of sense: and our acquaintance with the Father of spirits must be preserved, by means of things seen and temporal. Hence a sabbath, a tabernacle, a temple; sacrifices, sacraments, sermons, are the insitution of Heaven; are the or-

dinaces of Him “who knows what is in man,” and what is necessary to man.

It is easy to conceive what the world would be, destitute of the modes and offices of religion, when we consider what men are, with the advantage of “line upon line, precept upon precept,” revelation upon revelation. The religious cremonies and services in use among ancient nations, whatever were their origin, become respectable in our eyes, merely from their antiquity: but when to antiquity is superadded *divine authority*; when we behold the great JEHOVAH condescending to describe and to appoint the rites of his own worship, to exhibit a model of all the instruments to be employed in his service, we feel something more than respect; we are filled with veneration; we break out into the exclamation of Solomon, “Will God indeed dwell with men upon the earth?”

Moses had now finally descended from the mount, furnished with complete instructions for settling the civil government and the religious polity of the nation which God “chose, to place his name there.” Under the direction of men divinely inspired for the work, he addresses himself to the execution of the plan which God himself had vouchsafed to delineate. From the liberality and zeal of the people, materials are speedily and amply supplied. Through the skill and assiduity of the artists, the business is speedily and successfully dispatched: and, on the first anniversary of the departure out of Egypt, the tabernacle is ready to be reared up.

It is not my design to attempt a minute description of that sacred structure, and of its furniture. But I find it impossible to pass them by entirely, as I apprehend a few remarks of a practical nature, fall directly within the design of these exercises, and may, by the divine blessing, render the awful monuments of religion in the wilderness, instructive and useful in gospel times.

The name and the nature of the tabernacle were, perhaps, intended to be emblematical of the whole dispensation, of which it was a leading instrument. A tent, or tabernacle, is a temporary and portable habitation, suited to a state of journeying or warfare; and this, in particular, was to be the guide to Canaan, to give the signal of motion and of rest; to lead the way to victory and peace: and when full possession was at length given, the tabernacle transferred its transitory glory, to the stationary glory of the temple; or rather was consolidated into one glory with it. Thus, all the positive institutions of religion are designed to be our monitors, guides and comforters in the wilderness; to introduce us into the promised land; and then the objects of faith shall become objects of vision, and the redeemed of the Lord shall worship together in that temple, from which there is no more going out.

Jehovah declared himself not only the spiritual Head of the Israelitish church and nation, but also their temporal Sovereign, the supreme Head and Governor of their political economy. As such he gave commandment to pitch a tent for the leader and commander of his people, from whence orders were expected and issued; over which the royal standard was seen perpetually hovering in the dreadful glory of a pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night. And the final fulfilling of the scriptures is the gathering into one, to the standard of the Redeemer, "a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," Rev. vii. 9; when at the sounding of the seventh angel, there shall be "great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever," Chap. xi. 15.

From the contemplation of a tabernacle constructed of parts that might be separated, and joined together again, as occasion required, we are led to contemplate

the “city of our solemnities,” Jerusalem that is above, “a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby,” Isaiah xxxiii. 20, 21.

The fabric in the wilderness was not a design of human skill, nor fashioned according to models seen in Egypt, but planned of infinite wisdom, erected, to a single pin, according to a pattern shown to Moses on the mount. In things which relate to the management of this world, a latitude is given to the exercise of human prudence and discretion; but in what regards the immediate worship and service of God, men are tied up to an iota and a tittle, “Thus saith the Lord.” The work of God is perfect, his law is perfect, his word is perfect, none can with safety add thereto, or diminish from it. A holy and a jealous God has fenced himself and his ordinances as with a wall of fire, which presumption attempts to break through at its peril. “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book,” Rev. xxii. 18, 19. When we consider the dreadful import of these words, who but must tremble to think on the rash, the irreverent, the profane use that is daily made of the name and the book of God. Is it thus ye requite your Maker, foolish creatures and unwise? “He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?” Job ix. 4.

The tabernacle consisted of three several apartments

one within another—The court, the holy place, and the most holy place, or the holy of holies. The temple of Solomon was built upon the same plan. And the earlier christian churches preserved something of a resemblance to it. For they consisted, first, of a spacious porch, where the penitents who implored the prayers of the faithful, the catechumens, the Gentiles, the Jews, and the heretics, were stopped short. The second compartment was the *Ναυς*, the nave, or body of the temple, where the faithful assembled, and performed their devotions; and the third was the *Βεμς*, or choir, into which ecclesiastics only were admitted, and in which were placed the altar, the throne of the bishop, and the stalls of the clergy.

Some learned men have given it as their opinion that the Grecians borrowed their noble and beautiful style of architecture, from the perfect Hebrew models described in the sacred volume; that it was transmitted by them to the Romans; from whom it has descended to all the provinces of their great empire, and continues to be the ornament and the glory of the modern world. Indeed it seems to be something more than human invention and art, that through the lapse of so many ages, so many revolutions of empire, so many changes of taste and opinion, the same arrangement and proportions should excite universal admiration, and yield universal delight; and that the slightest deviation from the principles of that noble art should instantly be observed, and universally offend the eye. Does it not seem as if he who formed the eye, had also deigned to design the model of what would fill and please it?

The court, then, was rather the large space of ground in which the tabernacle was erected, than any part of the tabernacle. Its form was an oblong, whose length was double its breadth, being an hundred cubits, by fifty, that is, according to the most approved calculation, an hundred and fifty feet by seventy-five. It

was encompassed on all sides by curtains of fine twined linen, fixed to fifty-six pillars of Shittim, that is, as the seventy interpret it, incorruptible wood, filleted with silver, of the height of five cubits, or seven feet and a half. The gate or passage into the court was a hanging of twenty cubits, curiously embroidered, and supported by four pillars of the same materials and workmanship. On all which particulars, I shall detain you to make this only remark: when we see the great God condescending to give directions concerning the formation and use of the most minute implements pertaining to sanctuary service, of pins, rings, loops and hooks, man is taught to consider nothing as beneath his notice which can affect his own credit, usefulness and comfort, or the fame, virtue and happiness of his neighbour. "Let all things be done by us decently and in order." Be it the glory of a fabulous Jupiter, that it is beneath his dignity, and inconsistent with his higher occupations, to attend to small matters. It is the glory of the living and true God, the Maker and Preserver of all things, it is the excellency of his administration, the beauty of his providence, that "the hairs of our head are numbered of him." "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father," Matt. x. 29.

On entering the court, the objects which first presented themselves were, on the one hand the altar of burnt-offering, and on the other, the laver for the priests to wash in. The materials and form of these two instruments of divine worship, have offered to the learned and ingenious, many curious subjects of speculation, some of which might perhaps amuse, but could not greatly edify you. As the whole service of the tabernacle was typical, and presented the "shadow of good things to come," it will not I trust be deemed a mere flight of imagination to suppose, that by the altar of burnt-offerings, and the use to which it was devoted,

the great atonement, the means of pardon and acceptance with God were shadowed forth; and that by the laver and its use, on the other hand, was represented the purity which becomes all who approach to a pure and holy God. In their nearness to, and union with each other, they exhibit that which brings the guilty near unto God, and that which fits them for communion with God. Justification freely by the grace of God, "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;" and sanctification by the Spirit of God, whereby we are prepared to be "partakers of the inheritance of saints in light." An altar without a laver were to encourage the offender to "continue in sin, because grace abounds;" a laver without an altar would be to inspire a vain confidence in an external and imperfect righteousness, to the neglect of that which is of God by faith, and which purifieth the heart. In conjunction, they represent man's happiest state and highest glory, sin forgiven, and nature renewed.

"The holy place," which was properly the tabernacle, presented itself at the upper end of the court. Its dimensions are not laid down by Moses. Those who take it for granted that the tabernacle was a miniature representation of the temple, from the measurement of that great edifice as described in the first book of Kings, make the length of the holy place of the tabernacle to be twenty cubits or thirty feet. It was separated from the court by a curtain, within which none but the priests were permitted to enter, and where they officiated at the altar of the Lord, in the order of their course. Josephus affirms, that when the priests ministered in the holy place, the separating veil was drawn up, so that they could be seen of the people. Philo, with greater appearance of truth, maintains the contrary opinion. It is clear from a passage in the gospel according to Luke, that the priest who officiated in the holy place of the second temple, was out of the sight of the people; for it is said of Zacha-

rias, when he was offering incense in the holy place, "the whole multitude was praying without;" that they waited for him, and " marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple," Luke i. 10, 21; and they discovered not the cause of it till he made it known to them by signs.

Though we are not informed of the exact dimensions of the "holy place," we know that it was a covered tent, with one fold of various materials upon another. First, ten curtains of equal size, of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen; embroidered with cherubims; and coupled together with loops of blue and taches of gold. Above these were extended eleven curtains of goats hair, hung together by taches of brass. These again were covered with rams' skins dyed red; and over all there was a covering of badgers' skins, probably as a protection from the injuries of the air and weather. The intention and meaning of this multiplied and variegated ceiling we pretend not to explain. Was it intended to represent the impenetrable recesses of the Eternal Mind: to check the folly and sinfulness of an over curious inquiry into mysteries which are intentionally concealed; and to teach men to make a wise and temperate use of known and revealed truth? Was it not sufficient to every pious Israelite, that the altar of burnt-offering and the laver of purification were under the open canopy of heaven, seen of all, accessible to all? And by this circumstance, did not even the law teach the open and unlimited extent of salvation by the great Atonement? Religion forbid, and the structure prevented, the body of the people from entering within the veil, or penetrating into the mysteries concealed under such a covering; one fold past, another, and another, in almost endless succession, opposed itself. Wo be to him who makes a mystery of what God has graciously disclosed; and wo be to him who presumes to pry into what God has intentionally hid from his eyes. Thus sublimely sings the enraptured British Psalmist:

Chain'd to his throne a volume lies,
With all the fates of men;
With every angel's form and size
Drawn by th' eternal pen.

His Providence unfolds the book,
And makes his counsels shine:
Each opening leaf, and every stroke
Fulfil some deep design.

Here he exalts neglected worms
To sceptres and a crown;
Anon the following page he turns,
And treads the monarch down.

Not *Gabriel* asks the reason why,
Nor God the reason gives;
Nor dares the favourite angel pry
Between the folded leaves.*

The furniture of the holy place is minutely described, and its meaning and use are not obscurely pointed out in many places of the sacred writings. It consisted of three articles, the golden candlestick with seven lamps; the golden altar of incense; and the table of shew bread. Each of which might easily furnish matter for a separate discourse; but we confine ourselves to general ideas, and practical observations.

The first piece of furniture in the holy place was "the golden candlestick to give light;" all whose appurtenances were of pure beaten gold. It was placed on the south side, that is, on the left hand as you enter the tabernacle, directly opposite to the table of shew bread. It was a talent in weight: which is about one thousand five hundred ounces, or one hundred and twenty-five Roman pounds, whose value, according to the calculation of the learned bishop of Peterborough, was five thousand and seventy-five pounds fifteen shillings and a fraction, of our money. It is the most generally received opinion, that all, or some of these seven lamps in the candlestick, were

* WATTS, *Horæ Lyricæ*.

kept continually burning; that they were extinguished in turn, to be cleansed and supplied with fresh oil; and that their parts were made to separate for this very purpose. As the priests alone could enter the holy place, to them of course was committed the whole charge of lighting, trimming, and cleaning the lamps. It is much easier to ask many questions on this subject than to answer one. Why the number of seven lamps in one candlestick; that number of perfection, as some have called it, and under which so many mysteries are supposed to be concealed? Why should it burn in a place where no eye was to see its light, or to receive benefit from it, except a solitary priest? Wherefore this waste of treasure for no apparent equivalent use? To all such questions it must be replied, "Thus the great Lawgiver would have it." "We know in part, and we prophecy in part. What he doth we know not now, but we shall know hereafter."

From this created, confined, imperfect, self-consuming light, we are led to contemplate that pure, eternal, undecaying LIGHT which communicates, of its own splendour, whatever glory any creature possesses. "We are led to Him who is the true light of the world."

We silently turn from the tabernacle in the wilderness to adore Him who in the beginning said, "Let there be light: and there was light." We are conducted in the visions of God, to contemplate the splendour of the christian churches, and behold "the Son of Man, walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." We are hurried forward to the last awful hour of dissolving nature, when "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." We are transported to that celestial city which "has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

Without encroaching on your time and patience, or running over the subjects with indecent and unprofitable haste, it were impossible to convey any proper and useful idea of the remaining utensils of this venerable structure, and the still more venerable recess enclosed within it, styled “the *most* holy place.” The description of these therefore, with the history of the august ceremonies of setting up the tabernacle, and the relation of the whole to the “better things to come,” of which they were the shadows, shall be postponed to another Lecture, which will conclude the second book of this Sacred History, and another annual revolution of our own frail, transitory life.—“Teach us,” O God, “so to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom,” Psalm xc. 12. Vouchsafe to dwell with us in thy word and ordinances; let “Christ dwell in our hearts by faith,” and raise us one after another to dwell with thee in the holiest of all, through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE VIII.

And it came to pass in the first month, in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journies: but if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not, till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journies.—EXODUS xl. 17, 34—38.

EVERY production of human power and skill bears this inscription, "I am made to perish." Man himself the moment he begins to breathe begins to die, and his noblest, most durable, and most glorious works are no sooner completed, than they begin to fall to decay. In vain we look for the monuments of ancient grandeur and magnificence; they have either wholly vanished away, or present to the eye scattered fragments, or tottering ruins, ready to dash themselves upon the ground. Where is now that city and tower which raised its proud head to heaven, in defiance of the waters of a second deluge? Neither the

solid and costly materials of which it was composed, the sacred purposes to which it was applied, nor the awful glory which once presided over and resided in it, having preserved from decay and loss, the tabernacle of the congregation, the work of divinely inspired Bezaleel and Aholiab. Of the magnificent structure on mount Zion, the wonder and glory of the whole earth, not one stone remaineth upon another.

All that was formal and instrumental in the ancient dispensation seems to have been, by the special appointment of Providence, destroyed and annihilated, that the spirit of it alone might remain. The tabernacle, and temple, and their service exist only in description; and in those simpler and more spiritual ordinances to which they have given place. And the institutions which now remain, are only preparing the way for a more august, more splendid, and more durable manifestation of the divine glory. The legal economy introduced that of grace by the gospel, and then passed away. The dispensation of grace, in like manner, is now performing its work, fulfilling its day, announcing, unfolding, introducing the kingdom of glory; and “when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”

The satisfaction of Moses, when the whole work of the tabernacle and of its furniture was completed, is more easily to be conceived than expressed. To see the pattern showed him in the mount exactly copied, the design of the great Jehovah perfectly fulfilled, must have filled the good man’s mind with delight ineffable. With a holy joy, similar to this, must every lover of the gospel observe the exact coincidence between “the shadows of good things to come,” and “the very image of the things;” between the predictions concerning the Saviour of the world, and their accomplishment; between the promises made unto the fathers, and the blessings enjoyed by their children. And what will it be, christians, in that world of bliss,

which is the end of our faith, and the grand object of our hope; what will it be, to find the entire coincidence between the descriptions contained in this book, of future and heavenly glory, and the things described; between the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel, and the glorious realities of our Father's house above; between the spirit which christianity now teaches and inspires, in order to dignify and bless mankind, and the spirit which all the redeemed shall feel, enjoy, and express, when raised to the dignity of being kings and priests unto God?

In the preceding Lecture we endeavoured to lead your attention to the form, use and end of the tabernacle erected in the wilderness, and of the several parts of its sacred furniture. The outward court under the open canopy of heaven, containing "the brazen altar of burnt-offering," on which incessantly burnt the consecrated fire for offering up the daily sacrifice; and close by it "the laver of brass for the priests to wash in." We conducted you with trembling feet into the "holy place," concealed in front from every profane eye, by a veil which it was death to draw aside; and from above, by covering upon covering, which no eye could penetrate. In this sacred recess were placed "the golden candlestick to give light, the golden altar of incense, and the table of shew-bread. Having spoken briefly of the first of these, we now proceed to recommend to your notice the other two.

The "altar of incense" was made of Shittim or incorruptible wood, overlaid with pure gold, of a cubit square, and its height double that dimension, with a golden horn arising at each angle, and the top encompassed with a golden border or crown. It had two rings of gold immediately under the border, to which were fitted two staves of the same wood, also overlaid with gold, for the conveniency of transporting it from place to place, as occasion required. Its use was to

burn, at stated times, a sacred perfume of a certain quality and composition, which it was unlawful to compound, or apply to any other use, or in any other place. It is clear from many parts of scripture, that the smoke of the sweet incense which ascended from this altar, was intended to represent prayer or intercession. "Let my prayer," says the Psalmist, "be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice," Psalm cxli. 2.

While the priest, invisible to every eye, was employed in burning incense in the holy place, the multitude were praying without. This leads us directly to consider the great "Apostle and High Priest of our profession, who has for us entered, not into the holy place made with hands, which was the figure of the true, but into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us." Though the veil be let down that we cannot behold Him, the eye of faith penetrates it, sees Him who is invisible; sees Him lifting up holy and unwearied hands in our behalf; sees the Prince with God prevailing. The veil was drawn aside, and discovered to the ravished eyes of the beloved disciple, an angel coming, and standing at "the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hands," Rev. viii. 3, 4. The solitary perfume of secret prayer, the combined incense of family worship, the mingled odours of public devotion, the prayers of all saints derive an activity, a force, an elevation from the merit and mediation of the Redeemer, which raise them to the throne of God, where, being accepted through the Beloved, they descend again in showers of blessings on the believer's head.

Behold the altar which sanctifies the gift, the ladder

whose foundation is on the earth but its summit reaches heaven, along which the ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation convey the vows, the praises, the holy desires of the faithful, up to their Father and their God; and re-convey the gifts and graces of their heavenly Father to his children upon earth. The approach to the golden altar of incense was by way of the brazen altar of burnt-offering: the new and living way that conducts "into the holiest of all," is through the rent veil of the Redeemer's flesh. Jesus having suffered the things which were appointed, entered into his glory. As by the altar of burnt-offering, so by the laver of purification, the holy place was approachable; for "without holiness no man shall see God;" and "every one that nameth the name of Christ must depart from iniquity."

The horns at the corners of the altar have been considered as emblematical of strength, and being tipped with the blood of the atoning victim, are conceived to represent the power of God, and the grace that is in Christ Jesus, united in the work of man's redemption.

The quadrangular figure of the altar, and the equality of its sides, may point out the impartial regards of the great Father of all, under the dispensation to which that given by Moses conducted, to men of every nation under heaven, and they prefigure the day when, according to the words of the Saviour himself, "men should come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven," Matt. viii. 11.

The materials of the altar, Shittim-wood overlaid with pure gold, by a bold imagination have been supposed a figure, of the two-fold nature of Christ: the purity, solidity, impassableness of the one, encompassing, supporting, securing the fragility of the other, defending it at all points, and bestowing upon it a value, strength and duration which it possessed not before.

Finally, the staves fitted to the rings, and perpetu-

ally in their place for the conveniency of motion, have been, with what propriety you will judge, construed into an emblem of the transitory nature of the whole dispensation which looked continually forward to something better than itself; which for ever warned the comers thereunto of their pilgrimage state saying, "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest." And it is remarkable, that after Israel was come to his rest in the land of promise, and the holy furniture of the tabernacle was lodged for perpetuity in the temple at Jerusalem, this memorial of motion and change still offered itself to view: the altar, the table, the ark, had the instrument of removing them always in its place, and, in concert with every part of the system of nature and providence, call upon men with a loud and distinct voice, saying, "Seek ye another country, that is an heavenly." But we proceed.

The third and last piece of furniture in this solemn repository was "the table of shew-bread," of the same materials with the altar, but of different dimensions, two cubits in length, by one of breadth, and one and a half in height: and, like it, furnished with staves fitted to four rings for the purpose of conveyance. Its use was to hold the shew-bread, consisting of twelve cakes, according to the number of the twelve tribes, of the finest flour, prepared according to a special prescription, in two piles of six each, to be renewed every sabbath day, and that which was removed to become the property of, and to be eaten in the holy place by the priests, the sons of Levi, who ministered at the altar. Now upon the very first sight of it, this ordinance, besides those circumstances which it possessed in common with others, seems designed to be a perpetual acknowledgment, on the part of man, of the care and kindness of a gracious Providence, which gives to men the rich enjoyment of the principal support of human life, bread, and with it, all the inferior accommodations and comforts which render it desirable. It was, on the other hand,

the security and pledge which God vouchsafed to give to his church and people, that bread should continually be given them: that while Israel owned and acknowledged God in the way of piety and devotedness to his service, he would own and acknowledge them, by an unwearied and effectual attention to their necessary demands and reasonable wishes.

A common table is the badge of familiarity and friendship, is the sweetest emblem of domestic union and happiness; of paternal concern, of filial tenderness, of brotherly love.

The “shew-bread” was appropriated to persons of a sacred profession, to sacred seasons, and a holy place; unless when the greatness of the occasion superseded the strickness of the letter, and the law of mercy took precedence of the law of sacrifice. O how much more extended the grace of the gospel! David alone and his company, and that only once, on a necessitous occasion, was admitted to the privileges of a son of Levi, to a participation of the consecrated bread; but “behold,” says the great Head of the christian church, “I stand at the door, and knock: if *any man* hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me,” Rev. iii. 20. What an honour was it to these Levites to be received and treated as the guests of the great Jehovah! But it is not once to be compared with the unspeakable felicity and honour of receiving and entertaining the King of glory. And such felicity is the portion of the meanest of the saints: thus shall it be done to the man, however poor or despised among his equals, whom He by whom kings reign delighteth to honour: for “behold, the tabernacle of God is with men,” Rev. xxi. 3. The twelve tribes, represented by so many cakes of bread, presented without ceasing before God in the holy place, were without ceasing admonished of their common relation to one another, and their constant security under their heavenly

Father's watchful eye, and the shelter of his expanded wings. "Can a woman forget her sucking-child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee," Isa. xlix. 15.

The renewal of the cakes every returning sabbath, different yet the same, removed yet remaining, the old applied to one use, the new to another, may not unfitly represent that bread of life which our heavenly Father's love has provided for the fare of our christian sabbaths—the very food which our forefathers lived upon; not another gospel, but that which was from the beginning; but served up for our use, by men possessed of different gifts, "according as God hath distributed to every man the proportion of faith:" and it is the happiness and the praise of every scribe who "is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, to be like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old," Matthew xiii. 52.

Once more, might not this table of the Lord, perpetually covered, perpetually furnished, be intended as a figure of that table, which the eternal wisdom of the Father has prepared and provided with "the bread which came down from heaven, to give life to the world?" And from thence, by an easy and natural transition, the eye ascends to our Father's house above, in which "there are many mansions," and where "there is bread enough and to spare;" and O how happy is that man who "shall eat bread in the kingdom of God."

Such was the holy place and its furniture; the uses to which it was applied, and the spiritual objects which it presents to our view.

With reverence we draw nigh to the last solemn recess of this venerable structure, called "*the* ark," by way of eminence and distinction; sometimes, "the ark of the covenant;" the ark of the "testimony;"

the ark of "his strength;" the ark "whose name is called by the name of the God of Israel." We shall pass by those circumstances which were in common to it, with the other implements of the worldly sanctuary, the holy places made with hands; and point out a few of those which were peculiar to itself. It was a close chest of two cubits and a half long, one and a half broad, and one and a half in height: of the self-same materials with the rest. The covering was denominated the mercy-seat; from the two ends of which arose two figures of cherubims, of beaten or solid gold with their faces turned, and their wings extended towards each other; looking down together towards the mercy-seat, and concealing it from the eye. For any one to touch this with so much as a finger, or to presume to look into it, except those who were divinely appointed for the purpose, was instant and certain death, as the dreadful punishment of Uzzah and of the men of Beth-shemesh awfully evinced. Its contents were the two tables of testimony, the golden pot with manna, the memorial of Israel's miraculous supply in the wilderness, and Aaron's rod that budded. Its principal use was to point out a way in the pathless wilderness for Israel to march in. From between the two cherubims the divine oracles were delivered, at first to Moses by a voice; for God conversed with him as a man with his friend; and afterwards to the high priest, who consulted by Urim and Thummim, which is supposed to have been a supernatural declaration of the divine will, by means of rays of glory darted from the most holy place, upon the breast plate which was studded with twelve gems. But the nature and manner of this consultation and response, now are, and likely to remain so, a secret to mankind.

Besides marking out the way, and directing the several encampments in the wilderness, we shall meet in the course of this history with a special interposition of it in many noted particular cases. By it the waters

of Jordan were divided asunder, and opened a passage for Israel into the promised land. Before it the proud walls of Jericho were levelled with the ground, after having been encompassed by it for seven days: its presence confounded Dagon, and plagued the Philistines. Treated with respect, or approached carelessly and presumptuously, it became a protection and a source of blessing to one family; a terror and a curse to another. The king of Israel reckoned it the glory of his house, and the protection of his kingdom; and had it conveyed with all suitable solemnity to the place prepared for it. And, finally, it completed the splendour and magnificence of the sacred edifice on Mount Zion, the joy and wonder of the whole earth. And the divine presence, of which it was the symbol, constitutes the safety, strength and happiness of every living temple which the Holy Ghost hath reared. Let my heart, O God, be an altar, from whence the sweet incense of gratitude, love and praise may continually ascend. "Arise, O Lord, into this thy rest; thou and the ark of thy strength. Let thy priest be clothed with righteousness; let me with all thy saints shout for joy. Turn not away the face of thine anointed."

The conjectures of the learned on the subject of the cherubim, are various, many of them fanciful, and for the most part unsatisfactory. The most obvious and most generally received opinion is, that they were emblematical representations of the angelic or heavenly host: and the attributes here assigned to them, their attitude, and their employment in the tabernacle service, correspond exactly to the idea given us in other parts of scripture of those flaming ministers who stand continually before God, execute his pleasure, adore his divine perfections, minister to the heirs of salvation.

The ark may be considered as the throne of God. The cherubim encompassed that throne, as the atten-

dants in earthly courts surround the throne and person of their prince. This is the precise idea suggested by the prophet Isaiah, of the nature and office of these blessed spirits, in the sixth chapter of his prophecy. "In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory," Verse 1—3. Thus also Daniel represents the same glorious object; "The Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him; thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him," Chap. vii. 9, 10. Micah saw in vision "the Eternal sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing before him, and on the right hand and the left." "The chariots of God," says the Psalmist, "are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place," Psal. lxxviii. 17. And in several other passages he addresses the Deity as *sitting*, and *dwelling* among the cherubim, Psal. lxxx. 1—Psal. xcix. 1.

The cherubim had their faces turned one toward another. This might be intended to represent the perfect union of sentiment and co-operation which subsists among these sons of light. In other places of scripture, we hear their voices in concert, raising one song of praise, as in the passage just now quoted from Isaiah, and Revelations, chapter fourth: "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty; which was, and is, and is to come." Verse 8. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to re-

ceive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created," Rev. iv. 11. These glorious beings, differing in degree, infinite in number, have nevertheless but one heart, one desire, one will, one aim—to praise and serve Him who is the author of their being, and the source of all their happiness.

The cherubim are represented as furnished with wings. This denotes the alacrity, promptitude and instantaneousness with which angels obey the divine will. Thus, the angel who appeared to Zacharias at the hour of incense, "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God:" and hence, elsewhere, in scripture, the activity of angels is compared to the velocity of the wind, and the rapid and irresistible force of fire. "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea he did fly upon the wings of the wind." "He maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire." "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure," Psal. ciii. 20, 21.

Once more; the faces of the cherubim were not only turned one to another, but bended together toward the mercy-seat, and their looks were attentively fixed upon the ark. This expresses the holy admiration, with which angels are filled, of those mysteries of redemption which the ark prefigured. To this remarkable circumstance the apostle Peter alludes in his first epistle, when speaking of salvation through "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow," he adds, "which things the angels desire to look into." The words literally translated import, "which things, angels stoop down to contemplate." It conveys a beautiful and striking idea of the gospel dispensation. Angels are exalted to the height of glory and felicity. They behold God face to face, and drink of the river of pleasure, at its very source.

They see his uncreated splendour shining before their eyes. They see his goodness in the blessings which they enjoy. They see his justice in the punishment of angels "which left their first estate." They see his wisdom in the government of this vast universe. In a word, every thing that is capable of filling the enlarged comprehension, of satisfying the inquiring spirit, is set before these pure and exalted intelligences. Nevertheless, amidst so many objects of wonder and delight, in the midst of all this felicity and glory, angels desire to be more and more acquainted with "the things which belong to our peace." They discover a God rich in mercy to men upon earth, as wonderful, as incomprehensible as a God abundant in loving kindness to angels in heaven: and forgetting, if it be lawful to say so, the lustre and happiness of the church triumphant, descend and mingle with the church militant, and find fuel to divine love, find materials for pleasing, advancing, endless investigation, in the work of redemption by Jesus Christ. "These things the angels," from the heights of heaven, "bend down" with humble earnestness, with holy desire "to look into."

I conclude with quoting a passage of the Rabbi Maimonides* on the subject. "God commanded Moses," says he, "to make two cherubim, in order to impress upon the human mind the doctrine of the existence of angels. Had there been but one cherub placed over the mercy-seat, the Israelites might have fallen into a grievous error, they might have imagined, with idolatrous nations, that it was the image of God himself, which they were required to worship under that form. Or they might have been led to believe, on the other hand, that there was but one angel. But the command given to make two cherubim, joined to this declaration, *O Israel, the Lord your God is one Jehovah*, settles both articles beyond the power of disputation. It proves that there is an angelic order, and

*More Nevoch. part III. chap. xlv.

that it consists of more than one; it prevents our confounding the idea of God with that of angel: seeing there is but one God who created the cherubim, and created more than one."

—In this sacred repository were laid up, for perpetual preservation, the awful monuments of the Sinai covenant, of the church established in the wilderness; the memorials of mercies past, the pledges of good things to come—"the tables of the covenant," the incorruptible manna, and Aaron's rod that budded: signifying to all future generations, the permanency and immutability of the divine law, the unremitting care and attention of the divine providence, the dignity and stability of the Levitical priesthood. But the whole economy, and every instrument of it, in process of time passed away. All was at length carried to Babylon. But the dissolution of the empire which dared to violate their sacredness, was involved in their violation and dissolution. Read the history of it, Dan. v. Verse 1—6. "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels, which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, that the king, and his princes, his wives and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God, which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another,"

Read the writing, with the interpretation of it. "This is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing; MENE, God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL, thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES, thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians," Verse 25—28. Read the issue. "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom," Verse 30, 31.

Such was the wonderful structure erected to the honour of God, and by his special direction, in the wilderness of Sinai. It was begun and perfected within the compass of little more than six months. Every thing was executed according to the pattern showed to Moses in the Mount. At length it was set up in all its splendour, with a mixture of holy joy and godly fear: and the divine Inhabitant took solemn possession in the eyes of all Israel. "A cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle."

"Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum: we have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. Who hath obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away," Heb. viii. 1, 2, 6, 13.

HISTORY OF AARON.

LECTURE IX.

And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto Mount Hor: and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there. And Moses did as the Lord commanded: and they went up into Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.—NUMBERS XX. 23—29.

THE lives of most men, from the womb to the grave, pass away unobserved, unregarded, unknown. When their course is finished, the whole history of it shrinks into two little articles; on such a day they were born, and after so many days they died. Of those who emerge out of the general obscurity, some begin their public career at an advanced period of life, and of course it consists of a few shining, interesting, important events, and is confined within the

compass of a very few fleeting years. While the progress of a little selected band, whom an indulgent Providence has vouchsafed signally to nobilitate, and whom the historic pencil is fond to delineate, is distinguished from the cradle to the tomb, by an uninterrupted series of splendid incidents, exemplary virtues, and brilliant actions.

The characters of men are mixed like their fortunes. The most perfect instruction, for the generality of mankind, which history furnishes, is perhaps supplied from the exhibition of mixed, that is, of imperfect characters. Unvarying scenes of fraud, violence and blood; the representation of undeviating, unrelenting, unblushing profligacy, must, of necessity, create disgust, or diminish the horror of vice. The real annals of mankind present no model of pure and perfect virtue, but one; and from its singularity, it cannot, in all respects, serve as a pattern for imitation. We contemplate it at an awful distance; we feel ourselves every moment condemned by it; we turn from the divine excellency, which covers our faces with shame, and casts us down to the ground, toward the mercy which has sealed our pardon, and the grace which raises us up again.

The fanciful representations of perfect virtue, which are supplied from the stores of fiction, can but amuse at most; edify they cannot. They want truth, they want nature, they come not home to the bosoms of ordinary men. I might more easily ape the state of a king, than imitate the affectedly sublime virtue of the heroes of romance. Many of the persons whose profession it is to retail those ideal virtues, are notoriously among the most abandoned and profligate of our race. Those examples, therefore, are to be considered as the most useful, as I flatter myself they are more frequent, which exhibit a mixture in which goodness predominates, and finally prevails; in which virtue is seen wading through difficulties, struggling with tempta-

tion, recovering from error, gathering strength from weakness, learning wisdom from experience, sustaining itself by dependence upon God; seeking refuge from its own frailty and imperfection in divine compassion, and crowned, at length, with victory over all opposition, and the smiles of approving Heaven.

Of this sort, is the history and character which the pen of inspiration, which the pencil of a brother has drawn, for the instruction of this evening.

Aaron, the first high priest of the Hebrew nation, and the only brother of Moses, their celebrated legislator, was born in the year of the world two thousand three hundred and seventy: before Christ one thousand six hundred and thirty-four: and before the birth of his brother three years. It is probable he came into the world before the edict of the king of Egypt was published, which commanded all the Israelitish male children to be put to death. For that edict seems to have been directed by a special interposition of Providence, precisely to mark, and eminently to signalize, the first appearance of the great prophet of the Jews. Exposed to no special danger in infancy, the subject of no interesting memoir in early life, distinguished by no memorable talents or exploits in manhood, we see him far declined into the vale of years before we see him at all; and, for all our knowledge of him, earlier or later, we are indebted to the labours of his younger brother. Another, among a cloud of witnesses, to prove that the birthright of nature, and the destination of Providence, are intended to confer distinctions of a very different kind. Moses has shone forty years in the court of Pharaoh, has formed an alliance by marriage with a foreign prince, and cultivated the virtues, and prosecuted the employments of private life for forty years more, before his elder brother is heard of. And when he is at length brought upon the scene, at the advanced age of eighty-three, it is to occupy an inferior department to his brother,

and the elder is yet again designed to serve the younger.

His first introduction, however, to our acquaintance, places him in a most interesting, respectable, and honourable point of view. We behold a venerable man, fourscore and upwards, agitated with public cares, and moved with fraternal tenderness and affection, on his way through the wilderness, in quest of his long absent brother. In these our days of speedy conveyance and communication from pole to pole, from the east to the west, by land, by water, through the air, we can form but a slender idea of the anxiety of friends, removed but a few leagues distance from one another, and their consequent ignorance of each other's situation. Proportionally sweet must have been the delight of meeting together, after long separation. Scripture has described this, as it does every thing else, in its own inimitable manner. "Aaron thy brother, behold he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart," *Exod. iv. 14.* Behold the interview with two brothers, not the result of previous concert, not the effect of human sagacity, not the fortuitous coincidence of blind, blundering, accidental circumstances: but planned and conducted of Heaven, and effected by Him "who worketh all things after the counsel of his will," and for a great and noble purpose.

The occasion of Aaron's first appearance in the sacred drama, is not less memorable. Moses having received the divine commission to proceed to the deliverance of his nation from Egyptian bondage, repeatedly excuses himself from undertaking that honourable employment, particularly on the footing of his deficiency in the arts of eloquence and persuasion. Did this arise from timidity in Moses? was it a false modesty and humility? or did he indeed labour under a defect of this kind? If the last, can we avoid reflecting on the wonderful equality with which nature

distributes her gifts? In conception who so sublime, in composition who so elegant, in narration who so simple, in a written language who so perspicuous, so forcible, so impressive as Moses? Can it be true, then, what he says of himself, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue," Verse 10. Who is so favoured of nature and Providence as to possess every talent, every blessing? who so hardly dealt with, as to be left destitute of all? The praise of eloquence certainly belongs to Aaron; for it is bestowed by him who is best able to estimate his own gifts. "Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well," Verse 14. But O how different the nature, the importance, the effect, the duration of one talent compared to another! The tongue which overawed Pharaoh, which astonished all Egypt, and charmed the listening ear of Israel, speedily became mute; and of its powerful charm, not a single trace remains behind: while the productions of Moses' pen, exist and shall exist till nature expire, to instruct, delight, and bless mankind.

The various instruments which Heaven employs are ever suited to their seasons, occasions and ends. The interview between the brothers takes place according as infinite wisdom had contrived it; and it behoved, on many accounts, to be a pleasant one. Two wise and good men, so nearly related, so fondly attached to each other, after a separation so tedious, to meet again in health, to confer together on matters of such high moment, to enter under the assured protection of Heaven, upon the noblest and most generous enterprize that can engage great and lofty spirits, the deliverance of their country! What a field for the exercise of private friendship, of natural affection, of public spirit! On Aaron, according to the divine appointment, fell that most grateful of all tasks, to announce to the wretched the period of their misery, "to proclaim liberty to

the captives," the truth and faithfulness of God to the desponding and dejected, and the possession of Canaan to the slaves of Pharaoh.

Eloquence has an enchanting power, even over those who have no interest in the subject of it. How potent, then, the enchantment of the heaven-taught eloquence of Aaron the Levite! What grace must have been poured into his lips, when delivering the message of love from the great "I AM," the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to their hapless offspring, assuring them that the time to favour them was now come, that his covenant was sure! With what ravished ears must the elders of Israel have listened to such tidings, flowing from such lips! Happy Aaron, thus accomplished, thus commissioned, thus prospered! Happy people, thus remembered, thus addressed, thus persuaded! But wherefore envy his honour, or their happiness? A greater than Aaron is with us; even He who says of himself, "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;" Isai. lxi. 1. We announce to you, that Jesus, "in whom all fulness was pleased to dwell," whom admiring multitudes worshipped, saying, "never man spake like this man!" whose all-commanding voice checked the boisterous elements, put demons to flight, and pierced the ear of death.

Christians, we come not to you with the eloquence of an Aaron; but we bare a message infinitely more important than his. Our "speech and preaching is not with enticing words of man's wisdom;" 1 Cor. ii. 4. O that it might be "in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God," 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. He proclaimed freedom from fetters of iron, and the oppression of an earthly tyrant; we proclaim lib-

erty from the bondage of sin; from everlasting chains under darkness; from the cruel tyranny of the devil; from the dreadful curse of God's violated law, which arms Satan with his tremendous power, digs the vast recesses of the unfathomable abyss, and feeds the inextinguishable flame of the fiery lake. He published a covenant of a temporary effect, which conveyed temporal advantages, which was clogged with hard and hazardous conditions, which has passed away. We publish a covenant, "ordered in all things and sure," whose stability depends not on our fidelity, which possesses a commanding influence on eternity, which proposes everlasting benefits, which makes provision for human frailty, which outruns our utmost wishes, composes our justest apprehensions, transcends our highest hopes. The message of Aaron issued in the prospect, yet distant, of a land flowing with milk and honey, of a pure air, and a fruitful soil; but infested with enemies, influenced by, and exposed to inclement seasons, and liable to forfeiture. But our preaching, men and brethren, looks beyond time, and the flaming boundaries of this great universe; it holds out the distant, but not uncertain, prospect of a celestial paradise, stored with every delight that is suited to the nature of a rational and immortal being; which is exposed to no hostile incursion, to no elementary strife; and whose eternal possession is insured by the almighty power of God, and the purchase of a Saviour's blood.

Aaron preached, alas! to men who could not enter in because of unbelief, and the tongue itself which announced Canaan to others, was silenced before Jordan divided. Avert, merciful Father, avert the dreadful omen. Let not the preacher, let none of the hearers of this night, be missing in the day when thou bringest home thy redeemed ones to thy heavenly rest.

—The events of Aaron's life are so blended with, and dependent upon those of his brother, that they cannot be separated. Many of them have accordingly

been already adverted to, and shall not therefore now be repeated, our intention being to select those passages of history, which are more personal and peculiar; which more clearly mark a distinct character; and which represent him invested with an office which was to be hereditary in his family, and typical of the unchangeable priesthood of the Son of God.

In the conclusion of the sixth chapter, Moses interrupts the thread of his narration, to deliver the genealogy of the family of Levi; a matter of no little moment in the settlement of that political and religious economy, which God was about to erect, for the better government of his people Israel. From this it appears, that Aaron and himself were in the fourth generation, in a direct line, from Levi, Jacob's third son; being the sons of Amram, the eldest son of Kohath, the second son of Levi. Hence they are in the fifth generation from Jacob, in the sixth from Isaac, and the seventh from Abraham. It farther appears, from this genealogical deduction, that Aaron had connected himself with the tribe of Judah, by marrying Elisheba the daughter of Amminadab, and sister of Naashon, who became soon after the head of the prerogative tribe, the progenitor of its long succession of princes, and the root, according to the flesh, of the promised Messiah. By her he had four sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. On all which I have only to observe, that as the miseries of Egyptian bondage deterred not Aaron from entering into that state which Providence has established for improving the happiness and mitigating the sorrows of human life, so the God in whom he trusted, rendered this virtuous union productive of a race of high-priests to minister unto the Lord, and to support the honours of their father's name and office, to the latest ages of the Jewish commonwealth.

With what care has Providence watched over, and preserved entire, the royal and sacerdotal line, till the

great purposes of Heaven were accomplished, till the descent of the promised seed was ascertained! From that period genealogy was, as it were, broken into ten thousand fragments, the connexion and succession of families were blotted out, as a thing of nought; and a new family was established on different principles, in endless succession, all claiming and holding of this "first-born among many brethren."

As Aaron is represented in the possession of the most pleasing powers of speech, to soothe the woes of Israel, so we see him armed with a tongue sharp as a two-edged sword, to smite and to break the pride of Pharaoh and of Egypt; and bearing a potent rod, endowed with power to deliver or to destroy. And in this the world is taught to respect, to revere the weakest, meanest, most contemptible weapon, which the hand of Jehovah vouchsafes to use. Its virtue lies not in itself, but in the arm that wields it. Through the whole of the astonishing transactions which follow, we find an exact order and method observed. Aaron uses not the rod at his own discretion, neither does God communicate his pleasure immediately to him; but the Lord gives the word to Moses, who delivers it to Aaron, who follows the instructions given him. And thus, by an example of the highest authority, we are instructed, in obedience to an injunction given long after under another dispensation, "that all things be done decently and in order."

The next memorable event of Aaron's life, after assisting in the plagues of Egypt and the consequent deliverance of Israel, is his contributing to the defeat of Amalek, by aiding Hur in supporting the weary hands of Moses his brother upon the mount. To the observations already made on this part of the history, I have only to repeat and to urge upon your minds the reflection of the Psalmist, "Behold how good a thing it is," in every point of view, "and how pleasant, for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Psal. cxxxiii.

1. By concord the weakest powers grow and stand: through disunion the strongest are dissolved and fall.

Aaron and his two eldest sons, with seventy of the elders of Israel, by divine appointment, accompanied Moses to the lower region of Mount Sinai, when he went up to meet God, in order to receive the civil and religious constitution of the state: and with them, as the federal heads and representatives of the nation, the political union and covenant were ratified and confirmed. And this brings us forward to the eventful period of Aaron's history, his solemn destination to the office of priesthood, his preparation for it, and his investiture in it.

The appointment was of Heaven; for "no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron," Heb. v. 4: and even a king, in latter times, who presumed to thrust himself into the priest's office, paid the price of his rashness, by a leprosy which cleaved to him till the day of his death, 2 Chron. xxvi. 16—21. "Take thou," says the great Source of all honour and authority, "take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons," Exod. xxviii. 1. It has been objected to Moses, as a proof of a selfish and worldly spirit, that he employed his authority, to perpetuate a station of the first dignity and emolument, in his own tribe and family, by the appointment of Aaron to the priesthood, and by the entail of it upon his posterity for ever. But surely the objectors must have studied the case very superficially. The priesthood, though of high dignity, possessed very slender emoluments, and still less authority. It subjected the possessor of it to much painful attendance, to much laborious and much unpleasant service, considered as a mere secular employment. It was a post, if of distinguished honour, so of high responsibility. But sup-

posing it were as lucrative and honourable as it is alleged, why did not Moses assume it to himself? Why did he pass by his own sons? Why not secure the reversion, at least, for his own children and their heirs? When a man has immediate descendants of his own body, he is seldom solicitous about the aggrandisement of more distant relations, especially to the prejudice of his own children. The conduct of Moses, therefore, in the disposal of this high office, on the supposition that he had a choice in the matter, is the reverse of selfish; it is generous and disinterested to the last degree. The dignity of magistracy is, in his own lifetime, communicated with Joshua; and, at his death, is wholly transferred to him. The office of high-priest is conferred upon Aaron, and made perpetual to his branch of the family; while the sons and descendants of Moses sink into the rank of private citizens, without the stipulation of so much as a foot of land, extraordinary, in Canaan, in consideration of their father's eminent services. Does this look like avarice and ambition? But the truth is, Moses had no choice at all in the case, and presumed to exercise none. God had declared his will, and that was sufficient to him, and will be so to every good man.

If we attend to some lines in the character, and some steps in the conduct of Aaron, we shall find more just reason of surprise at his appointment to this sacred office. We behold him, at the very era of his appointment, an abettor of idolatry, and even after his instalment in it, we find him meanly and wickedly envying the distinction which was put upon his meek and gentle brother, and with his sister Miriam, heading a revolt from his just authority. But, alas! were perfect men only to minister before God, the altar must soon be deserted. Were not sinful men to be addressed by sinful men, the world must speedily be destitute of preachers. "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the pow-

er may be of God, and not of us," 2 Cor. iv. 7. The design of Providence, from the beginning, seems to have been to convince the world that in every hand his work must prosper; that if he interpose, all instruments, the most inadequate, must prove powerful, and shall succeed.

A few remarks on the particulars of Aaron's sacred dress, the services in which he was employed, his solemn consecration to the performance of them, and the subsequent events of his life up to the age of one hundred and twenty-two, together with a cursory view of his typical importance, as the figure of the great High-Priest of our profession, shall, with divine permission, furnish the subject of the next Lecture. We conclude the present with earnestly exhorting you,

—To be instructed by the history of Aaron to begin to live betimes: if not to public observation, utility and importance, at least to the purposes of piety, and to the duties and virtues of the private man and of the citizen. He lived long in obscurity, before he arose into distinction, and was nurtured in the school of affliction, for station and eminence. And it is generally found that those persons fill high and difficult situations most respectably, who arrive at them through painful study, many obstacles and much opposition. It was late, very late in life with him, before he began to appear on the great theatre: let none be thereby deluded into the vain, deceitful hope of living long. The instances of a longevity so vigorous, and so extended, and so distinguished, are too rare to encourage any one to trifle with the season of improvement, to neglect the present hour, to presume on a distant, uncertain futurity. Old age, should you be one of the few who attain it, never can be supported with dignity, nor enjoyed in comfort, if youth be wasted in dissipation, be permitted to rust in ignorance. In order to possess the vivacity and soundness of youth, under the pressure of years, a portion of the reflection, steady-

ness and composure of age, must be called in, to temper and direct the pursuits and enjoyments of early life.

—It is natural to be dazzled with the display of shining talents, and to envy the possessor of them. But these, also, are the portion of, only a favoured few. The eloquence of an Aaron is, perhaps, more rarely to be found, than a man of a hundred and twenty-two years old. Covet, then, and cultivate the virtues which are attainable by all, and are in themselves infinitely more valuable than the gifts which are bestowed more sparingly, which do not always prove a blessing to their owner, and are not always accompanied with true goodness, which alone is in the sight of God of great price. Has an indulgent Providence, however, distinguished you by those rarer accomplishments, which lead to fame, to honour, to usefulness? See that you bury them not, pervert them not, abuse them not. Ability, unsupported by worth, by moral excellence, only renders a man more odious and contemptible, as well as more dangerous, more mischievous and criminal. He is responsible both to God and man, for the use or abuse of his superior powers: and to be *conspicuously* criminal and wretched is a dreadful aggravation of guilt and misery. “Covet earnestly the best gifts:” and yet it were easy to show unto you “a more excellent way.” If you know it, happy are you if you pursue it.

HISTORY OF AARON.

LECTURE X.

And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto Mount Hor: and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there. And Moses did as the Lord commanded: and they went up into Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.—NUMBERS XX. 23—29.

WHAT subject so interesting to man as his intercourse with God, his Creator, Preserver, and Judge? And yet on no subject have men fallen into wilder and more dangerous mistakes. A mad and bold enthusiasm has, at one time, elated rash and presumptuous spirits to the level of Deity; and the grossest terms of human familiarity have been employed, in addressing that infinitely holy and glorious Being, in whose pre-

sence angels veil their faces. A timid and grovelling superstition, on the contrary, has barred to others, all access to God; and an affected, over-refined devotion has subverted the interests of true piety. The love of this world has encroached upon, and extinguished the spirit of religion; and a misguided, ill-informed religion has attempted to detach some men from the duties and employments of life.

Men, ever in extremes, have either banished God entirely from their thoughts, or affected a higher degree of reverence for his service, by an avowed neglect of some of the more obvious and more important dictates of his will. Could they but be persuaded to take the holy scriptures for the rule of their conduct in all things, many of these practical errors might be prevented. They would thence be instructed to draw nigh to a holy and righteous God with reverence and confidence, as children to a father; and to rejoice before a merciful and compassionate Saviour with fear and trembling. While the eye of a guilty conscience beheld "cherubims and a flaming sword turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life," the eye of faith would discern "a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh," Heb. x. 20.

The whole of divine revelation, and indeed it is the chief end of revelation, represents the great Jehovah as accessible to the guilty and the miserable; but accessible only in a method, and by means, of his appointment. To the vilest, meanest, most wretched of mankind there is hope towards God, through Christ Jesus the Lord: but to the purest and most perfect of our fallen race, "there is not salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved," Acts iv. 12. All the stores of divine grace are laid open, all the energy of divine eloquence is employed, to assure and encourage the humble. "The Lord, the Lord God,

merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin," *Exod.* xxxiv. 6, 7; while one denunciation of justice serves to check and repel the impenitent and the proud, "but who will by no means clear the guilty."

The institution of the priesthood under the law, was an explicit and a standing declaration to the same purpose. It consisted of a succession of men, and of a service, ordained of God to be a perpetual memorial to mankind of their apostacy and guilt, and of the means of pardon and reconciliation; of their being by nature and wicked works afar off, but made nigh by the blood of atonement.

Aaron, the first who was called to execute this high office, had already attained his eighty-fourth year, and of course had become venerable in the eyes of men by reason of age. He possessed an insinuating and commanding address; he had acquired a high degree of estimation, from the honourable share that belonged to him, in effecting the deliverance from Egypt; and he was only brother to the illustrious and renowned legislator of Israel. But his noblest and most honourable distinction was his appointment and call from Heaven, to the discharge of the duties of this exalted station. The pen of inspiration, however, always faithful and true, represents him as a man liable to many infirmities. At the waters of Strife he was betrayed into anger, self-conceit and presumption; in the matter of the golden calf, we find him chargeable with timidity and sinful compliance: he stands convicted of unkindness and ingratitude to the best and most affectionate of brothers; of the most daring irreverence and impiety towards God, and of dissimulation bordering on falsehood. And even after his consecration to the priesthood, with shame and sorrow we behold him wickedly giving into the mean and contemptible passions of envy and jealousy; and, to heighten this

base offence, the unoffending, unprovoking object of these passions, was his own nearest relation, and the man to whom he was indebted for all that eminence to which he was himself raised, and which he transmitted to his family. But with all these imperfections on his head, and many others, doubtless, of which it was not the business of this record to convey the memory to us, he was the man whom God was pleased to choose, to minister in the first rank at his altar, and to typify the High-Priest who became us, "who is holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners."

As in every thing that related to the construction of the tabernacle and its sacred furniture, Moses was confined to a pattern shown, and to directions given him in the mount, so also in all things that related to the dress, the services and the attendance of the high-priest and his assistants. And you will please to observe that Moses himself, having been called and consecrated in an extraordinary manner, was constituted the temporary high-priest, to officiate in the consecration of Aaron and his sons. They saw therefore the person of a mediator interposing between themselves and God. They saw an extraordinary priesthood, conjoined to legislative authority, residing in their brother, the man whom God chose, and from whom their honour immediately flowed; they saw an image of the station they were henceforth to occupy, and the purposes which they were to fulfil towards the whole nation. Moses was between God and them, they were to be between God and the people. He offered sacrifice to make atonement for them, they were to offer sacrifice to make reconciliation for the sins of all Israel. And in this we see a priesthood more ancient and more honourable than that of Aaron, from which it derives its existence, dignity and use, and in which it is now absorbed.

As nothing is unimportant on this subject, nothing but what has a significancy, though that significancy

we are unable in every instance to discover, we find the sacred historian entering into a minute detail and description of the sacerdotal robes in which, however, it is not our purpose to follow him, as we would rather suggest ideas than repeat words, aim at instruction rather than indulge in speculation, and without pretending to explain every thing, would aim at the praise of inculcating useful truth.

The vestments for the priests are distinguished by the term *holy*: “Thou shalt make the *holy* garments for Aaron.” “Thou shalt put upon Aaron the *holy* garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office,” Exod. xl. 13. Now this epithet must undoubtedly refer to the nature of that pure and perfect Being in whose worship they were employed; to the sacredness of the character which was invested with them; and to the spotless purity of Him, whose person was hereby prefigured, and whose sanctity, independent of garments of such a texture and quality, consisted in a total freedom from moral pollution, “who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” The vestments of the Israelitish high-priest, however splendid, could not but cover much weakness and imperfection. Like the dispensation which enjoined them, they had only “a shadow of good things to come, and could never make the comers thereunto perfect.” But even in a moral and religious view, surely they were not without their use. They were a constant and affectionate admonition from God to the persons who wore them; saying, “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” They were a constant and pathetic admonition to the people; saying, “I will be sanctified in all them that draw nigh unto me.” They are an everlasting admonition to the christian world, who are all kings and *priests* unto God, that they are called and engaged “to holiness in all manner of conversation.” If times and places, and dress, serve as guards to virtue, if they preserve

decency, and prevent vice, do they not answer a valuable and important purpose to mankind? In perfect conformity to this idea, the loftiest and most conspicuous article of the high-priest's dress, was a plate of pure gold, affixed with a blue lace to the fore front of the mitre, having engraved upon it this remarkable inscription, in order to be seen and read of all men: "*Holiness to the Lord.*" Thereby the wearer became "as a city that is set on a hill, which cannot be hid," Matt. v. 14: and this bright memorial incessantly, though silently, proclaimed to the eye, to the heart, to the conscience, "a holy God, a holy service, a holy minister, a holy people, a holy covenant."

We accordingly observe the strictest attention to external decorum run through the whole of this divine institution. The eye being one of the great avenues to the soul, guilt being the parent of shame, and the dispensations of the divine wisdom and mercy being adapted to the condition and character of men, as they are, depraved and degraded by sin, not as man was, pure and perfect from the hand of his Creator, the heart and conscience must be addressed through the senses.

The next most observable and significant part of Aaron's dress, was the splendid breast-plate, consisting of twelve several precious stones set in gold, inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes in their order; placed externally upon the seat of the heart, to keep for ever alive, a tender concern about the whole Israel of God, to remind Aaron and his sons for ever, that they were elevated to this high station, not for their own sakes merely, but to be a public benefit. It aimed at producing a most important effect on three different sorts of persons, and was well calculated for this purpose. It presented unto God, according to his own ordinance, a memorial of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and their seed after them. It taught the high-priest to consider

the case of the people as his own, to regard them with impartial, undivided affection, to be watchfully attentive to their temporal, but especially to their spiritual concerns, to wrestle and make supplication in their behalf. It inspired the people with affection and gratitude to the man, whose whole life and labours were devoted to their service, who watched for their souls who had renounced an earthly portion among his brethren, and all the gainful walks of life, to be subservient to their best interests. It formed a most endearing bond of union between them who were administered unto, and them who ministered. It formed a most endearing bond of union among the tribes themselves. Twelve gems of various complexions, set in two different frames, composed nevertheless but one breastplate; so twelve tribes constituted but one congregation, one church, one Israel. The loss of any one must have marred and destroyed the whole; tended to diminished its lustre, to impair its strength. It taught them to love as brethren the children of one father, the worshippers of one God. It inspired confidence in the care and protection of that God. They saw their representative bearing upon his heart, into the holy place, their names and their condition. They had the consolation of reflecting that their memorial would ascend to heaven, with the sweet perfume of that incense which he daily burned upon the golden altar. And the whole looked forward to the day, to the office, to the person, to the work of Him, of whom, and of whose body, the church, Isaiah thus speaks in prophetic vision: "But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me," Isai. xlix. 14—16. and who thus speaks of himself, "Those that thou gavest me I have kept.

Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me; that they may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world," John xvii. 11, 12, 21—24; and of whom the apostle thus speaks, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us," Rom. viii. 33, 34. Hence christians are united in still dearer bonds, animated with superior confidence, secured by a firmer and more durable covenant. Hence christian ministers are encouraged with greater boldness, with more ardent importunity, with more assured hope of success, to draw nigh to the throne of grace, as for themselves, so for sinful and wretched creatures of every description.

Under the gospel dispensation every hour is the hour of incense, every believer a minister of the sanctuary, every individual, a name engraven upon the heart of the great "Apostle and High-Priest of our profession," and recorded in "the Lamb's book of life, among the living in Jerusalem."

The other particulars of Aaron's official dress, we shall not now stop to commemorate: partly, because we have not a distinct idea of them, and partly, because through such a thick cloud as time, change of manners, and the general disuse of the sacred language,

have interposed, it is difficult, if not impossible, to discover their meaning and import, with reference to the evangelical dispensation; in which great part of the beauty, excellency and usefulness of the Mosaic economy consists.

The ceremonies of Aaron's inauguration, were in a high degree solemn and august. They were performed by Moses himself, in the most public manner. Aaron and his sons were conducted to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, in the presence of a public assembly called for the purpose; were stripped of their usual garments, and washed with water. He was then arrayed in the several parts of the sacerdotal habit, in their order. The holy vessels of the sanctuary, and all its sacred utensils, were then, one after another, anointed with the holy oil of consecration; and, last of all, Aaron himself, the living instrument of divine worship, was set apart to his momentous charge, by a copious sprinkling of the same sacred perfume. The savour of this odorous compound must have been extremely grateful to the sense, is evident from the lofty terms in which David speaks of it, and the subject which he illustrates by it—"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments," Psalm cxxxiii. 1, 2.

The sons were then invested with their proper habits, and a three-fold sacrifice was performed: a bullock for a sin-offering; a ram for a burnt-offering; and a second, denominated the ram of consecration. Without going into a minute detail, or pretending to explain the specific difference, use, and end of each, we observe in general, that by the ceremony of the imposition of Aaron's hands and those of his sons upon the head of the victim, a solemn wish was expressed, that their guilt might be transferred and imputed to the vic-

tim, and its blood accepted as a ransom for their forfeited lives. Here, then, was the innocent suffering for the guilty; the substitute, not the criminal himself, bleeding and dying; so that the very form of their consecration taught the necessity of atonement, and pointed to Him whom it pleased the Lord to bruise, and to put him to grief; and who "was wounded for our transgressions, was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed," Isai. liii. 5.

The first of the three sacrifices, or the sin-offering, seems to have been intended as a public and explicit acknowledgment of guilt, and the expiation of it. The second, that is, the burnt-offering, was the token of the divine favour towards them, and of his gracious acceptance of their persons and services: and the third, the ram of consecration, part of which was eaten by the priests in the holy place, was the ratification of God's covenant of peace with them, and the emblem of perfect reconciliation and friendship; sitting at one common table being the most express declaration of union and good will among men. God was pleased to exhibit a most unequivocal proof of his being well pleased with the whole transaction; for when every thing was arranged according to the form prescribed in the mount, fire from the Lord seized and consumed the burnt-offering on the altar. The sin-offering Moses burnt with material fire, without the camp; but the sacred flame from heaven laid hold of the sacrifice of pardon and acceptance. In vain do we look for the marks of grace and favour from above; insensible must we be to the genial, penetrating flame of love, unless our repentings be kindled together. When we have been enabled to do our duty, then may we warrantably expect that God will appear for us.

It does not appear whether this striking interposition had been previously announced to the assembly, or whether it took them by surprise. In either case, it must have

made a deep impression on the mind of every beholder. Were they taught to expect it? With what anxiety may we suppose every eye bent on the altar and the sacrifice, waiting the eventful moment which was to evince that God was among them of a truth; but in a way which should inspire reverence as well as joy. Did it overtake them unawares? What sudden consternation, what alarming apprehensions! The expression was perfectly natural in either case; "which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces," Levit. ix. 24.

Thus was the first high-priest of the Hebrew nation inducted into his office. Thus explicitly were laid down the principles, form, design and use of the most ancient civil and religious polity in the world. While the first beginnings of religion and government, in every other nation under heaven, lie buried in darkness, confusion and contradiction; aided by light from heaven, we can trace up to its very source, the origin of a nation the most singular in the annals of mankind; raised out of an ancient pair, and "them as good as dead;" repeatedly threatened with utter extinction during the first ages of their existence; but miraculously preserved in the very jaws of destruction: formed for conquest, eminence and empire, in a desert; raised, after many struggles and revolutions, to a pitch of affluence and grandeur, unparalleled in history, and declining again as fast into contempt and obscurity: but, even in contempt and obscurity, supported, preserved, fenced on every side—In captivity, undissolved; in the wreck of empire maintained, upheld, rescued, restored! At length, we behold them involved in one mighty ruin, driven from their capital and their country: their temple, the great bond of union, razed from the foundation: and themselves henceforward scattered among the nations, during a period of near two thousand years. And yet, by a strange and unaccountable interference of Providence, though hated,

despised and persecuted of all men, and evidently under the displeasure of Heaven, we behold them preserved from total annihilation and oblivion; kept distinct from all men; as much a separate people, as in the zenith of their glory, under the reign of David and Solomon; the subjects, perhaps, of a revolution greater and more important than any they have already undergone: reserved, it may be, to be the last grand trophy of the Redeemer's triumph, the concluding evidence of the truth of christianity, the final monument of the riches of free sovereign grace! And need we ask, who conducted all these movements, whose pleasure was fulfilled by all these events, whose glory shines in all these successive changes, in all these opening prospects? A voice from heaven replies, "I the Lord, wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working; wise in heart, and mighty in strength. I see the end from the beginning; my counsel shall stand."

—When this great mystery shall be finished, the mighty chain extended, the connection and dependence of link upon link discerned, hell shall be confounded, the inhabitants of the world astonished, angels rejoice, and the praise of God ascend from every tongue.

The solemn service being over, we may suppose Aaron and his family retiring with the complacency of good minds, rejoicing in the honour put upon them, in the eyes of all Israel; in the prospect of a dignity higher than the pomp of kings, which was about to descend to their latest posterity; and, above all, in that open declaration of the divine approbation, the celestial fire that consumed the fat of their sacrifice. But, alas! what condition of humanity admits of certain, unmixed, or lasting felicity? That useful, necessary, awful element, which signally interposed to declare the choice of Heaven, speedily interposes to punish and to afflict that chosen family, and to serve as a

warning, for ever, that "God will be sanctified in all them that draw nigh to him."

The remaining incidents of the high-priest's life, which we have on record, are but few in number, but they are instructive, and interesting, as we hope to make appear, if God shall be pleased to indulge us with another opportunity of this kind.

In reviewing the subject, we observe what it is that constitutes the perfect character of a priest of the most high God; *Holiness to the Lord* on the forehead; uppermost, overlooking all, directing all; and Israel resting upon the heart.

The ministers of religion are, by their office and station, perpetually admonished to shun every appearance of what is mean, selfish or ungenerous. They are appointed of God to aid, instruct and comfort their fellow-creatures; to promote their best interests; to cherish in them the best and noblest principles of their nature; and they are urged to perform this, by the highest considerations which the human mind can feel. Whatever be the dispensation, the spirit of the office and the nature of the service are the same. They stand as mediators between God and men. They bear on their hearts the names, the infirmities, the wants, the distresses, the sorrows, the joys of the people; and carry them with sympathy and affection to the throne of grace: and they return from thence bringing on their lips the "answer of peace." They lose themselves in labours of love; they sink every unworthy aim, every low pursuit, in seeking the glory of God, and the prosperity of the Israel of God. The minister who understands, feels and performs his duty, is one of the most exalted of beings.

Aaron and his sons were consecrated to the service of God, and of the congregation, by the sprinkling of *blood* applied to the ear, the hand, the foot. Thus their whole faculties were claimed by their great Author, and were thus devoted to him: and the symbol

of atonement became the seal of their dedication. And thus every christian becomes a priest unto the most high God, redeemed by blood, set apart by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. "Wash me, Lord, and I shall be clean, sprinkle me, and I shall be whiter than snow:" "Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Rev. i. 5, 6.

"Every high-priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity," Heb. v. 1, 2; but "if perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law) what further need was there, that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?" Heb. vii. 11—"But Christ being come an high-priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood; he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Heb. ix. 11—14.

The fire once kindled supernaturally by the celestial flame, was to be kept alive by human care and attention. Miraculous interpositions of Providence are not to be expected, as an indulgence to carelessness and sloth. He only who diligently exercises the powers

which God has given him, who employs the means which Providence has furnished, and which conscience approves, can with confidence look up to Heaven, and rejoice in hope of divine assistance. Would you that the sacred flame of devotion, of charity, should live in your heart, should glow upon your tongue, resort daily to the altar of God, and preserve its activity by “a live coal” from thence. Then your face shall shine, then your lips shall overflow with the law of kindness, then your hand shall open to the sons of want, then you shall “rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.”

HISTORY OF AARON.

LECTURE XI.

And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto Mount Hor: and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there. And Moses did as the Lord commanded: and they went up into Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.—NUMBERS XX. 23—29.

WERE it not that life and immortality have been brought to light by the gospel, human life must appear in the eye of sober reason, a trifling scene of vanity and impertinence. Wherefore drops that babe into the grave as soon as he is born? Why was the wretched mother torn with anguish to bring him into the world? Was it only to be torn with more cruel anguish, to behold him prematurely snatched out of

it again? Why is that old offender permitted to live, a burden upon the earth, the derision, hatred, and scorn of mankind? Why does that minion "fret and strut his hour upon the stage," arrayed in the glitter of royalty? Wherefore strides that barbarian from conquest to conquest, from continent to continent? Why pines modest worth in indigence and obscurity, and wherefore, at length, perishes it on a dunghill? These, and a thousand such questions that might be asked, the doctrine of immortality and of a judgment to come, resolves in a moment. "We know but in part, we see in a glass darkly." What the great Lord of nature, providence and grace doth, we know not now, but we shall know hereafter.

The brevity and extension of life, difference of rank, talent, office and condition, variety of fortune and success, acquire an importance not their own by their influence on character and moral conduct, by the changes which they produce on the soul of a man, by their reaching forward into eternity, and by producing effects which no length of duration can ever alter.

Men die, offices pass from hand to hand, dispensations change; but the purposes of Heaven are permanent, the plans of Providence are ever going forward, and while one generation of men removes to that world of spirits from whence no traveller returns, another rises up to contemplate the wonders of that which now is, and to carry on the business of it. Hence wise and good men become not only concerned about their own future and eternal happiness, but about the prosperity and happiness of the world, after they have ceased to see and enjoy it. Hence they cheerfully engage in schemes which they cannot live to execute, and justly soothe their souls to peace, in the prospect of a kind of immortality upon earth. Hence among the other motives to excel in goodness, this has a pleasing and a powerful influence, "the righteous shall

be had in everlasting remembrance," "while the memory of the wicked shall rot."

It is as difficult to make the proper estimate of death as of life. Death is an undoubted mark of the divine displeasure against sin, and is inflicted as a punishment upon the guilty. But, like all the punishments of Heaven, it is upon the whole, and in the issue, an unspeakable benefit to good men. The just estimate of death, then, must depend upon what we are, and upon the consequent change which death shall produce in our internal character, or outward condition. It is a light evil to be stripped of priestly robes, the work of man's hands; and to return naked into the earth as we came from it; it is a light thing to feel the earthly house of this tabernacle dissolving, and the head which wore the mitre or the crown sinking into the dust; while the promise of Him who is faithful and true, rears for us "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," 2 Cor. v. 1; while the eye of faith contemplates that "crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give at that day: and not to one only, but unto all them also that love his appearing," 2 Tim. iv. 8; assured that "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord."

If ever there was an enviable domestic situation, it was that of Aaron elevated to the priesthood. Think of the honest pride of honourable alliance: and who would not have been proud of such a brother as Moses? Reflect on an office of the highest dignity and respect, procured not by cabal and intrigue, but bestowed by the voluntary appointment of Him who is the source of all honour. A suitable provision likewise made for the support of that dignity, and an external habit annexed to it, that could not fail to attract notice and reverence. The sacred office was entailed upon him and his family for ever, and that family built up by four hopeful sons, coadjutors and

successors: and, to crown the whole, these pleasing, flattering circumstances were crowned with an open, unequivocal, indubitable mark of the divine approbation. The fire of heaven caught hold of their burnt-offering, and kindled a flame never to be quenched. But alas, how short-lived was this tranquillity! The sons of Aaron are hardly consecrated to their office, when the two eldest profane and disgrace it. Celestial fire has scarcely proclaimed the favour and acceptance of God, when with unhallowed fire, which he commanded not, they defile his altar and his service: and thereby call down a second time fire from above, to avenge a holy and righteous God, as before to display the grace of Him who is good and merciful. The notoriety of the late transactions, the sacredness of their character, and the distinguished regard of Heaven expressed toward them, greatly enhance the atrociousness of their guilt, and justify the severity of their punishment.

This tragical event is thus recorded by Moses, whose method it is neither to extenuate, nor to set down aught in malice. “And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord,” Lev. x. 1, 2. The words are few, but they convey a full and distinct idea of the guilt of the parties; though by attending to the context, we shall have reason to conclude their crime was of a very complex nature. And surely it could be no common transgression which drew down a judgment so dreadful. Bishop Patrick is of opinion that Nadab and Abihu had rendered themselves incapable of doing their duty by intemperance; that they indulged in the delicacies of the sacrifice to a criminal excess, till they were incapable of putting a difference between holy and unholy, and between clean

and unclean. This conjecture is founded upon the injunction which immediately follows the narration of this dismal story in the ninth and tenth verses. "Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever, throughout your generations: and that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean." If there be truth in this conjecture, it is a melancholy proof that the best things are most liable to abuse, that the brutal part of our nature is ever ready to run away with the rational: that as God is continually employing himself in bringing good out of evil, so men are for ever perversely employing themselves in bringing evil out of good.

Others have charged upon these two sons of Aaron, the criminality of attempting to enter the most holy place, which was not permitted but to the high-priest, and that only at certain stated times. This charge is established in the following manner. In the passage we have quoted, it is said, that it was *before* the Lord that Nadab and Abihu offered incense with strange fire. Upon comparing this with what is recorded in the sixteenth chapter in the first and second verses, where Moses recapitulates this sad event, we find it added, "The Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil, before the mercy-seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat." Hence it has been inferred that the two young men, uncalled, unauthorized, presumed to enter that august department of the tabernacle, assuming to themselves privileges that belonged only to the supreme priesthood, which in their father's life time it was unlawful to intermeddle with, and which even he himself durst not at all times exercise. But though neither of these suppositions be improbable, we have no occasion to go so far for a

discovery of their crime, nor to account for the severity with which it was punished. The sin of Nadab and Abihu consisted simply in this, they burnt incense with *strange fire*. Now the meaning of this expression we shall be able easily to collect, by comparing together a few passages that have an obvious connection and serve to illustrate and explain each other. First, in Leviticus, chapter the ninth, verse twenty-fourth, it is said that "fire from the Lord," that is, either fire immediately descending from heaven, or issuing out of the cloud that covered the tabernacle, consumed the first victims which Aaron offered for a burnt-offering. Again—This sacred fire, once miraculously kindled, was by a special ordinance to be kept for ever alive; as we read, Leviticus chapter the sixth, verses twelfth and thirteenth. Thus the vigilance, attention and care of man, was to preserve and continue what Providence had begun. By another ordinance it was enjoined, that the incense to be offered on the day of atonement, should be kindled by a portion of that perpetual fire. This we read in Leviticus, chapter the sixteenth, verses eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth. This then was the fire which the Lord commanded to be used; and of course, every other kind of fire, however produced, and though in all other respects adequate to the purpose, was unlawful, forbidden or *strange*. This accordingly constituted the guilt, they took upon them to kindle the incense, which their office obliged them to burn every evening and morning, with a fire different from that which burned continually on the altar of burnt-offering: every other being *strange fire*, which the Lord commanded not. Now it was certainly fit and necessary that such a crime should be punished in the most exemplary manner. The sanctity of the whole institution was over at once, if the ministers of it might with impunity, in the very setting out, presume to dispense with its most august ceremonies. The rank and station of the offenders

was a high aggravation of their offence. It was their duty to have set an example of scrupulous regard to the known will of God. They had been admitted to more intimate communion with God than others; had seen more of the terrors of his power, more of the wonders of his grace. Unhappy men! how had they been betrayed into an error so fatal? Ignorance it could not be, the voice of the law was yet sounding in their ears. Dared they to be careless in any thing that related to the service of a holy God? They had seen the exactness of their pious uncle, in forming every thing according to the pattern showed him in the mount. Was it indeed a wilful and deliberate violation of the law? I fear, I fear it was; and dreadful was the expiation. The unhallowed fire of their own kindling was quickly absorbed in a hotter flame: "they died before the Lord; for there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them," Lev. x. 2. Neither their sacred character, the sacredness of the place, nor the sacredness of the employment, can protect them from the keen stroke of avenging justice. "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 28, 29. Unhappy father! what were now thy feelings; bereaved in one sad day of half thy children, of thy first, thy darling hopes: to behold them thus immaturely cut off, taken away in anger! The bitterness of death is not relieved by one consolatory circumstance. What is the loss of children in infancy, and falling by the stroke of nature, compared to this? To heighten the old man's affliction, he is expressly forbidden to mourn, or to assist in the last sad offices of humanity towards his deceased sons. Behold him in mute dejection and distress, ministering in the duties of his charge, attentive to the calls of the living, leaving to others the care of burying the dead. How severely must his own offences now have been brought to his remembrance! He had been guilty of a

crime of equal or greater magnitude; he had led the way in idolatry, and presided in the worship of a thing of his own fabrication; but justice suffered him to live, to live to see his own sons dying for a crime similar to his own. Alas, what is prolonged life but lengthened anguish!

As the giving of the law was fenced round with fire, and the sanctity of the tabernacle worship guarded by a flaming sword; so the meeker, gentler institution of the gospel, fortified its first beginnings by executing judgment on presumptuous sinners. Severity is the soul of a law, especially when it is notified to those who are obliged to submit to it; indulgence, or the appearance of feebleness, are of the most dangerous consequence, especially in the commencement of a new constitution. One of the heralds of the Saviour of mankind began his ministry by a clap of thunder; the first rays he shot from his eyes were mortal, and the sudden death of two false and perfidious disciples was the seal of his apostleship, Acts v. The second coming of the Lord himself is to be "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Thess. i. 8.

Aaron had now arrived at an advanced period of life, at the possession of an office and rank in life, which rendered him an object of envy to some, and of veneration to others. He had oftener than once been corrected by his own folly, and he was "the man who had seen affliction by the rod of God's anger;" but neither the fire of calamity, nor the frost of age; neither the counsels of experience, nor the sanctity of office, have been able to subdue the indwelling corruption; for we immediately find him in a plot, with Miriam his sister, to disturb the peace, diminish the respect, and distress the government of their brother Moses. Their pretence was his marriage with an "Ethiopian woman;" an event which had taken place

forty years before; an union which had no immorality in it; which transgressed no law, for the law was not then given; and against which God himself had not expressed any displeasure; but had crowned it with the blessing of children, who were justly admitted to rank in Israel.

Their real cause was their envy of the pre-eminence, which their younger brother had obtained over them in all things, civil and sacred. For this, in spite of all their art, breaks out in the malicious whispers which they scatter abroad to blacken their brother's reputation. "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us?" Numb. xii. 2. If Moses indeed erred by marrying Jethro's daughter, he had severely smarted for it; for being induced, by an improper compliance with her humor, to neglect the circumcision of his son, he had nearly paid the forfeit of that neglect with his life, by the hand of God himself; and now his good name is bleeding on Zipporah's account, by the envenomed tongues of his own brother and sister; and "who can stand before envy?" Who can think to escape, if Moses remain not unhurt? This attack upon his fame and comfort gives Moses occasion to deliver his own eulogium; and I believe it just, for he gives it with that lovely simplicity, which characterizes all that he relates of himself or of others. "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth," Numb. xii. 3. He either had not heard the scandalous speeches which were propagated to his disadvantage by Aaron and Miriam; or he pitied and he neglected them. Who knows what length the mischief might have gone, had it not been heard and avenged by the Protector of injured innocence. "The Lord heard it." Let the slanderer hear this and tremble.

The two brothers and their sister are now summoned to present themselves together at the door of the

tabernacle of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord appears: and a voice from that glory pronounces aloud and at full length, the praise of the man who had spoken so modestly of himself, and who had been so wickedly maligned by his own nearest relations. "And he said, Hear now my words: if there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" Numb. xii. 6, 7, 8. In many respects Moses was "the figure of Him who was to come," and in both were peculiarly verified the words of Christ, "a man's foes shall be they of his own house," and, "a prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house," Matt. xiii. 57. With God to resent is to avenge; having reproved the transgressors he withdraws in anger, and lo, the punishment is already inflicted. "The cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and behold she was leprous," Numb. xii. 10. A shocking example of divine displeasure against one of the most odious of crimes. My fair hearers, let me whisper an advice in your ears. I am no common-place declaimer against your sex; I honour it, and I wish to improve it; you must hear me with the greater attention, and mark what I say. You lie under a general imputation, respecting the vices of the tongue; but general imputations are for the most part ill-founded. I do not mean, however, to insinuate that you are totally innocent, or more so than the other sex: for your affections are eager, and what the heart feels, by the eyes or the tongue you will express; and that expression is sometimes too

strong for either piety or prudence. I mean to caution you, at present, on a particular fault of the tongue, which effects my own profession, which is far from being foreign to the subject, and on which I deem myself both qualified and entitled to advise you.

Women, among other favourite objects, have their favourite systems of religion, and their favourite preachers; and, following the impulse of an honest affection, they are for establishing their favourite object on the ruins of every competitor. What is the consequence? In the event of difference of opinion, or of attachment, one man is unmercifully, unrelentingly run down, and another is, with equal want of reason, magnified and exalted. Women, young women, good young women, think they are only yielding to the impulse of a pious affection, when they applaud or censure this or the other public character. But what are they doing indeed? Blowing up one poor vain idol of straw into self-confidence and importance; and piercing through, on the other hand, an honest heart with anguish unutterable; perhaps robbing a worthy, happy family of its bread, or, what is more, of its peace and comfort. I am no stranger to what is by some termed religious conversation, and I am seriously concerned about the topics of it. It generally turns upon persons, not things. Now, it ought to be just the reverse. Persons always mislead us, for no one is wholly impartial: but truth is eternal and unchangeable. Apply then the rest.—Does the conversation dwell upon this man or his neighbour, his rival or his enemy—check it, away with it; what have the interests of piety to do in the case? Had he never been born, “the foundation of God” would have stood as it does, without his feeble aid. Call no man master in sacred things, but Christ: and take care that you measure neither orthodoxy, sense nor virtue, by the imperfect, fluctuating standard of your own caprice, affection or understanding. Were similar punishment instantly to follow

the vices of the tongue, as in the case of Miriam, I shudder to think how many a fair face now lovely to the sight, must by to-morrow morning stand in need of a veil; but not for the same reason that the face of Moses did on his descending from the mount, to temper its lustre; but to shroud its loathsomeness and deformity. Consider what hath been said, and “set a watch on the door of your lips,” and “keep the heart with all diligence.”

HISTORY OF AARON.

LECTURE XII.

And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto Mount Hor: and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there. And Moses did as the Lord commanded: and they went up into Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.—NUMBERS XX. 23—29.

THE love of life is one of the most useful and important principles implanted in human nature; and death, the necessary end of all men, is an event, mercifully and in wisdom hid from our eyes. Hoping that we may live till to-morrow, we feel ourselves impelled to exert ourselves to-day, to make some provision for it. Not knowing the time of their death,

men are engaged to act as if they were immortal. And though no wise man would "wish to live always," or can deem it possible, yet the precise period never comes, when we find ourselves so entirely unoccupied with temporal prospects or pursuits, so totally mortified to the world, as to be disposed with cheerfulness to leave it. Hence the business of the world goes on, which would otherwise stand still; and that God of whose years there can be no end, is carrying on designs of everlasting moment, by frail and short-lived instruments. This man makes a few feeble, dying efforts, and expires. Another comes after him, takes up the instrument which his fellow had laid down, makes his stroke or two, and expires likewise; and yet by means of efforts so weak, so interrupted, and self-destroying, the purposes of Heaven proceed, the building of God rises; every loss is instantly repaired, every defect supplied, and no chasm in the chain of Providence is permitted to take place. Hence men are dignified with the title of fellow-workers with God, and the perishing attempts of perishing creatures are employed in maturing the plans of infinite wisdom, and are honoured by the acceptance and approbation of Him who "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." What a motive to diligence, exertion and perseverance!

"I paint for eternity," replied the great artist of antiquity, when reprehended for an over curious, painful and laborious attention, to the more nice and delicate touches of his favourite pieces. What a lesson of encouragement, admonition and reproof to christians! They are indeed acting for eternity; not like the painter, pursuing the empty bubble, reputation, but aiming at "the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls. They are striving continually to bring a new tribute of praise to God, and to promote the everlasting happiness of mankind.

It is truly pitiable to see a poor creature cleaving to

life after the relish of it is gone, merely from a fond attachment to the things of time. It is more lamentable still to behold a miserable wretch shrinking from death, through a well-grounded horror of its consequences. But to desire life from a desire of doing good; to be willing to continue in the flesh, for the greater good of the church and of the world, argues a great, a noble and disinterested spirit; it excites our love and admiration. That man is indeed immortal, the daily language of whose conduct is, "Let me perform at least one good action more. I know I am to die; let my tongue, then, yet once again speak praise to God and instruction to man, before it becomes for ever silent. Before the cold hand of death freezes up the genial current at my heart, let it pour out the gentle stream of kindness, sympathy and love. While this arm is able as yet to extend itself, and this hand to expand, let it be extended to protect the oppressed, to support the weak; let it be expanded to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to relieve the miserable. Ere my eyes close, to open no more, let some one of the wonderful things of God again pass through them, to revive my drooping spirits, to cheer and elevate my sinking soul; and before I divest myself of my robes of office, never to resume them, let me humbly endeavour to minister to the Lord, and to the spiritual wants of men, in the duties of my station."

Calm and composed as was the death of Aaron, we advance toward it with slowness and reluctance, and therefore with eagerness seize the occasion which scripture affords, of adverting to some further incidents of his life, before we come to the history of that fatal event.

It was with astonishment and grief, we saw him engaged in a plan of disaffection and sedition against his amiable and excellent brother; and in wonder mixed with terror, we observed the mingled lenity and severity of the punishment inflicted by God on that impi-

ous, unnatural and ungrateful conduct. But the offence was not expiated when Miriam was struck with leprosy, and Aaron thereby tacitly reprehended; when Miriam was restored, and Israel permitted to move forwards. Transgressors often flatter themselves that surely the bitterness of death is past, when a righteous God is but awaking to vengeance; and it is not seldom found, that between crimes and punishments there is such an apparent affinity, that the criminal cannot but read his guilt in the evil which overtakes him; and the world is made to "see," not only "the rod," but "him that hath appointed it."

Six years have elapsed, from the sedition of Aaron and Miriam, when a similar conspiracy is formed to discredit the government of Moses, and the priesthood of Aaron, by certain turbulent, envious and ambitious men of their own tribe, in confederacy with some of a similar spirit of the tribe of Reuben. So widely and so suddenly has the malignity of revolt spread itself, that no less than two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown, with their adherents, have been infected by it: and Aaron has his large share of that obloquy, which he had before so unjustly employed, to weaken the hands, and to blast the reputation of his brother. But ah! my friends, a leprosy of seven days could not wash away the stain of this transgression; neither could the blood of one unhappy victim make atonement for a crime in which so many were involved. The Lord creates "a new thing," to mark the severity of his hot displeasure. When Moses had made an end of denouncing the judgment of God, it came to pass the "ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perish-

ed from among the congregation. And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense," Numb. xvi. 31—33, 35. A plague broke out among the people, which, before it was stayed by the interposition of the high-priest himself, offering incense between the living and the dead, had consumed fourteen thousand seven hundred.

What, O Aaron, were now thy feelings, surveying a field of blood so dreadful and so extensive! What were thy feelings in reflecting that for the very offence which thou thyself hadst committed, Miriam was a leper, and thousands were slain! Did not thy heart tremble, as the sword of the destroying angel laid heaps upon heaps, whilst thou stoodst in the fearful gap, lest its keen edge should reach thyself?

It is remarkable that the enormity of the greater crimes which Aaron committed, was exposed by the judgments wherewith God visited similar crimes in others, not in himself; whereas, for an apparently lighter transgression, his life was irrecoverably forfeited, and he fell under a doom, which no penitence nor supplication could alter or avert. We cannot judge of the malignity of crimes from certain external circumstances. Both in the good which men do, and the evil they commit, God principally regards the heart and intention; but to discern and to judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart, is a prerogative, which with awful propriety he has reserved to himself.

God has punished the defection of Korah and his abettors in the most open and exemplary manner. Not satisfied with this, because the memory of judgments the most signal and alarming, is apt speedily to be obliterated—such is the thoughtfulness and folly of men!—he was pleased to appoint a lasting memorial of the preference which he had bestowed on Aaron and his family, and to confer a fresh badge of distinction on the man whom he delighted to honour.

Moses is directed to take of each of the tribes of Israel a several rod, and to inscribe every one with the name of the prince of that tribe to which it belonged, writing the name of Aaron on that rod of the tribe of Levi. They were to be laid up together over night before the Lord, in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, and previous intimation was given to all concerned, that by the next morning, God would give an explicit and unequivocal declaration of his will, respecting the office of priesthood.

The God whom we adore, would rather make himself known by the wonders which he performs, and the mercies which he dispenses, than by the judgments which he executes. It was fulfilled accordingly. The rods of the eleven other tribes remained as they were deposited; separated from the parent stock, sapless, withered, and dead; but the rod of Aaron, as if it had been still a branch united to a living root, and by a progress of vegetation infinitely more rapid than nature knows, in the course of one night, “brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds.” Numb. xvii. 8. And lo, a miracle as great as a lifeless twig bringing forth fruit, the fierce and angry spirit which acts of just vengeance had but irritated, is by a miracle of kindness and condescension, mollified, melted, subdued, extinguished: and thus necessary are signs and wonders to silence and persuade murmuring, unbelieving Hebrews, as well as to render inexcuseable impenitent Egyptians.

This mark of preference having been openly exhibited, for the conviction and satisfaction of all, commandment is once more given to carry back this wondrous rod, and to deposit it by itself before God, with the other sacred furniture of the most holy place, to serve to latest posterity as one of the precious monuments of the divine favour to their forefathers. It is highly probable, that it always preserved that verdure to which it was thus preternaturally restored; and is

a lively image of the constant preservation of the universe, by that all-powerful Word which spake it into existence at first; of the continued support of life, by the merciful visitation of that Spirit who “breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul,” Gen. ii. 7.

Aaron, thus again distinguished and honoured of Heaven, continues to enjoy the dignity, and to perform the duties of the priesthood for thirty-one years longer; we doubt not, with credit to himself, and to the satisfaction and advantage of all Israel. But, alas! he has the mortification of seeing that people gradually and imperceptibly wasting away before his eyes; he feels himself the dying minister of a dying congregation; he observes the hand of justice doing that by slow degrees, which it might have accomplished at once, and employing forty years in what it could have made the work of a single moment. At length the stroke of death comes home to his family, and it may be presumed to his very heart. In the one hundred and twentieth year of his age, and thirty-seventh of his priesthood, Miriam, his sister by nature, his friend by habit and affection, and, sad to think, his companion in offence, is removed to a world of spirits, and he is warned of his own departure, by the loss of one of his nearest and dearest relations. Moses delineates her character with singular conciseness and simplicity. The hand which she had in his preservation, when he was exposed, in early infancy, upon the Nile, procures her an interest in his affection, and in those of his readers, which the blameableness of some parts of her after conduct is unable wholly to destroy. Our censure of her envy and malignity, in more advanced life, is somewhat softened by the recollection of her childish tenderness, attachment, vigilance and address: and, while we condemn the vehemence of her spirit, and the unruliness of her tongue, the edge of resentment is blunted, when we see her punished there, where a

female is most vulnerable, in the fairness of her looks, and the agreeableness of her person, and we heartily join in the prayer of Aaron in her behalf: "Alas, my lord, let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed, when he cometh out of his mother's womb;" and in that of Moses himself; "Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee." From thence to the hour of her death, a period of thirty-seven years, the history is entirely silent concerning her, and this is, perhaps, the highest praise that can be bestowed upon her. The sharp reproof which she had received for presuming to intermeddle in public affairs, had taught her, we are bound in charity to believe, that the post of honour, for a woman, is a private station; that she is then most distinguished, most respectable, most valuable, when the world knows and talks least about her.

That self-same year the fatal summons is addressed to Aaron also, and one brother is made the messenger of death to the other. The same hand which arrayed him in splendid apparel, and consecrated him to the high and honourable office of priesthood, must strip him again, and anoint him to his burying. The whole progress of this solemn scene is highly pathetic and interesting. Let us attend the funeral procession to the top of mount Hor, and learn to die to the vanity and glory of this world, and to cleave, with increased ardour, to that gospel, by which "life and immortality are brought to light," and to trust in that great High-Priest, who, though he "was dead, is alive, and lives for evermore," and giveth "eternal life to as many as he will."

Death, the most common of all events, at every season, and in whatever form it comes, is tremendous and affecting; but the appearance of death, in the scene before us, is altogether singular and uncommon. It is indeed the death of an old man, but not occasioned by any apparent decay of nature, not preceded by long

sickness, not hastened on by disease or accident; but the spirit is surrendered at the command of God, in the fulness of health, in the composure of perfect recollection, without a hesitation of reluctant nature, without regret, without a pang. When sentence of death was pronounced upon Moses himself, and for the self-same transgression which shortened the life of Aaron, we find the fondness of nature, and the fervour of religion, repeatedly uniting, to crave a reprieve at least, if not a total remission: but Aaron, when summoned to depart, whether it was from superior fortitude of mind, from the consciousness of greater demerit, or that the historian has charitably drawn a veil over a brother's infirmity, while he frankly exposes his own, prepares instantly and cheerfully for the event.

Were we to follow the impulse of imagination, we might, without overleaping the modesty of nature, represent to you the deep concern wherewith the good man's own family was affected when the award of death was pronounced, the concern of all Israel at the thought of being deprived of the labours, the advices, the example and the prayers of their venerable high-priest: the concern of Moses in being made the messenger, almost the executioner of death, upon his much beloved brother, associate and friend; himself too lying under the same condemnation. If after he received the command to ascend the mountain, that he might die, he was permitted to minister in the priest's office any more, to pour out the blood of the sacrifice, to burn incense upon the altar, to lift up his hands and bless the people, with what holy fervour may we suppose these sacred services performed! with what devout attention would they be listened unto and waited upon, when both minister and people knew for certain they were to meet no more! May we not suppose the good man in strains such as these, taking a last, long farewell of those to whom he had for so many

years stood in a relation so tender and so intimate. "The time of my departure, O Israel, it is at length come, and I am ready to be offered up. That God who appointed me to serve you in holy things, permits me to wait at his altar no longer. I have fulfilled my day. I have finished my course. I have survived the greatest part of my cotemporaries, but must die at length. I leave you with remorse, because I accuse myself of many failures in point of duty towards you; I leave you with regret, because I sincerely love you; I leave you with joy, because I can with confidence commit you to a guardian Providence, even to the God of your fathers, who can easily supply my place, by one wiser, holier and more faithful than me; and who, I trust, will continue still to rule and to lead you by that best of men, of brothers, and of friends. My body leaves you, but my spirit cannot be separated from you; in death it will cleave unto you; and when set free from the clogs of sense, it will still hover over you, attend your journeyings, and, finally, rest in peace when Israel rests in the promised land. These forty years have I borne your names engraved on jewels, upon my heart, and I will carry you with me in my heart, to the regions of eternal day. Farewell, my sons; Eleazer, the heir of my dignity and anxiety, and Ithamar, my youngest hope. Think of the dreadful fate of your elder brothers, and serve the Lord with reverence and godly fear. Think of your father's errors, and learn wisdom. Ponder his approaching dissolution, and learn the nothingness of human grandeur. Call to your remembrance what Providence has done to and for me, and rejoice with trembling. Again I am summoned away; it is the voice of Moses, of my brother; it is the voice of God I hear. The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. I come, my brother; I know whose

command thou bearest; I know that I must obey. But to part with thee is the bitterness of death; endeared as we are to each other by friendship, as allied by blood—conjoined in office, knit together by habits of affection, united in life, and, blessed reflection, not to be long divided by death. Thou wilt bury all my unworthiness in the grave; thou hast already buried it in the profounder, silenter tomb of a gentle and forgiving heart. I come, O my God, at thy call; I desire not to live, if thou biddest me to die. Yet I mourn to think that my death is a mark of thy displeasure. But I see the sun shining through the cloud; it is not wholly in anger, thou art summoning me away; thou art graciously putting an end to my painful labours, my anxious thoughts, my imperfect services, to my weaknesses and wanderings, and exalting me to a dignity far beyond what I have hitherto enjoyed. I shall see thee as thou art. I shall serve thee without wearying. I shall offend no more. Henceforth is laid up for me, a diadem for glory and for beauty, a crown of righteousness that fadeth not away. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Arise, let us go hence. Arise, let us ascend to the top of the mountain.”

Having, in whatever language, bidden a final adieu to wordly connexions; in the sight of all the people, the high-priest, in all the splendour of his official habit, sad and solemn, climbs up the hill, from which he never was to descend. What were the emotions of Israel in gradually losing sight of their venerable patriarch, to see him no more again for ever? What were the feelings of the patriarch in surveying from the summit of the mountain the goodly tents of Jacob, in which he had an earthly concern no longer? Nature casts many “a longing, lingering look behind;” but faith looks forward, and beholds mortality swallowed up of life. Nature regrets a promised land; unseen, unpossessed, unenjoyed, because of unbelief: faith

stretches the wing, and aims a bold but not uncertain flight, to a heavenly Canaan, where “the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are for ever at rest.”

The spirit fails as we proceed. The death-warrant is again recited. The justice of the sentence is acknowledged, and the prisoner prepares for death. The golden crown, the mitre, the girdle, the ephod, the breast-plate, are one after another deposited, and human glory is patiently surrendered. As they were severally yielded up by the father, they are severally assumed by the son. Stripped of all that covered the body, the body itself is at length laid down, and the mortal blow is at length struck by Him who saith, “I make alive, and I kill.” Aaron dies, but Eleazar lives. The priest expires, but the priesthood is immortal. Three ascend, only two return. What matters it how the poor pershing clay tabernacle was disposed of? About the spirit of the man whom God thus called away, we can be under no anxiety nor apprehension. A general, and I doubt not, an unaffected mourning of thirty days takes place; and all Israel lament when dead, the man whom many had envied, maligned and persecuted through life.

This is one of the many happy consequences and effects of death! It shuts the mouth of scandal; it brings to light unnoticed or obscured virtues; it draws the veil over blemishes and imperfections.

Let the son of pride, who is rising into splendour, and bears “his blushing honours thick upon him,” turn his eyes to the top of yonder mountain, and learn the nothingness of all the glory of man. Is his station higher than that of the high-priest of Israel? Are his vestments more magnificent, is his character more sacred, is his dignity more permanent, flow his honours from a higher source? Behold Aaron laid low: retiring from the world, naked, as naked he came into it; the head which once wore the mitre, levelled with

the dust; the tongue which once spoke so well, for ever dumb.

The hour of rest nightly admonishes us of the last fatal hour. We strip ourselves of our garments one by one, and lay them down; we are reduced to the image of death; the eye is closed; our faculties are absorbed; the form of the man only remains. And the time is at hand, we know it, when we must put off this body, as an uneasy, worn-out, useless vestment, fit only for the moth or the dunghill. "Man must say to corruption, 'Thou art my father; and to the worm, 'Thou art my sister and mother.'" "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness of man as the flower of the field."

Our very children are the harbingers of our dissolution. They are the pleasantest, but the plainest monitors. Every step they rise brings us a little lower; as they grow stronger and stronger, we grow weaker and weaker. They wait to assume our name, our place, our robes, our office; they are ready to array themselves in our spoils. The elevation of Eleazar is the fall of Aaron. The public life of the son, is the death of the sire.

Look to that mountain, O man, and reflect that he whom now you hate, envy, oppose, malign, will speedily be changed into a clod of earth, and rendered incapable of feeling or returning thy animosity; and learn to die betimes to these wicked and odious passions. Suppose him laid on the bed of death; stript of those honours, talents, advantages, successes which render him the object of jealousy and malignity to thee. How you are disarmed! Pity and tenderness awake in your breast. You now hate yourself, that ever you could hate your brother. Let the reflection of what may soon happen, reconcile thee to him now. Mar not thy own comfort, by seeking to disturb his repose. The cold hand of death will speedily extinguish the angry flame.

“They truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them,” Heb. vii. 23, 24, 25. “He need not daily, as those high-priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high-priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore,” Heb. vii. 27, 28.

HISTORY OF BALAAM.

LECTURE XIII.

These are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity; the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, forbad the madness of the prophet.—2 PET. ii. 15, 16.

OF all the evil propensities to which human nature is subject, there is no one so general, so insinuating, so corruptive and so obstinate, as the love of money. It begins to operate early, and it continues to the end of life. One of the first lessons which children learn, and one which old men never forget, is, the value of money. The covetous seek and guard it for its own sake, and the prodigal himself must first be avaricious, before he can be profuse. This, of all our passions, is best able to fortify itself by reason, and is the last to yield to the force of reason. It most unremittingly engages the attention, and calls into their fullest exertion all our powers of body and of mind. Ambition and pride, those powerful motives of human conduct, are but ministering servants to avarice. Reputation and power are pursued chiefly as the means of procuring wealth; and all the fierce contentions which have distracted the world, and deluged it with blood, may be traced up to an eager de-

sire to obtain the territory, or the treasure of another. Age, which blunts all our other appetites, only whets this; and after the heart is dead to every other joy, it lives to the dear, the inextinguishable delight of saving and hoarding.

In exact proportion to their incapacity and disinclination to make use of money, is the violence of men's thirst to possess it; and on the threshold of eternity it cleaves to them, as if their life were just beginning. Philosophy combats, satire exposes, religion condemns it in vain: it yields neither to argument, nor ridicule, nor conscience. Like the lean kine in Pharaoh's dream, it devours all that comes near it, and yet continues as hungry and meagre as ever. If a representation of the odiousness, criminality and danger of this vile affection can be of any use, it must be to those whose hearts are not yet hardened, whose consciences are not yet blinded by habits of indulgence in it; for if it has once gotten possession of the mind, you might as easily reinvigorate feeble age by a discourse on the advantages and joys of youth, or restore a constitution wasted through consumption by an elaborate declamation on the blessing of health. Avarice, with the deaf adder, "will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely," Psalm lviii. 5.

We have already had occasion, in the course of these exercises, to trace the character of a selfish man, and to observe the workings of the human mind, under the influence of this base and destructive passion, in the history of Laban the Syrian. There we saw every principle of generosity and gratitude, of truth and justice, of humanity and natural affection, of piety and decency vilely sacrificed to this insatiate idol, which, like the grave, "never says it is enough." We have in the history referred to by the apostle, in the words which I have now read, another striking and instructive instance of the dreadful operation of covetousness, in a mind enlightened by wisdom, awake to all the

worthier feelings and propensities of nature, capable of forming the justest notions of right and wrong, and of conveying these notions in the clearest and strongest expressions; fully instructed and firmly persuaded respecting his duty; but actuated by this fatal passion, deliberately deviating from the right path, seducing those whom he durst not curse, degrading the dignity of the prophet, in the venality of the courtier, and shamefully bartering conscience for gain. We shall find, then, the words of Peter a perfect key to the relation of Moses; and whatever inconsistency shall appear in the conduct of Balaam, whatever fluctuation in opinion; whatever plausibility of language and sentiment, combined with whatever irresolution in virtue, all is explained by this one discovery of his real character, he “loved the wages of unrighteousness.” We come to illustrate this position by the history of itself.

Forty years almost have elapsed since the miraculous deliverance from Egypt; and the whole generation which partook of the joy of that deliverance because of their unbelief, is well nigh extinguished. Thousands and ten thousands have dropt into the grave. The individuals which formed the congregation of Israel are lost and forgotten; but Israel still lives, the care of Providence, the object of favour. The shafts of vengeance have spent themselves, and nothing can now stem that current of promise and destiny, which is carrying God’s favoured people to victory, and the possession of Canaan. Their decampments and progress, therefore, are no longer the lingering and wanderings of a devoted people doomed to die in the wilderness; but the bold, direct and successful progress of a warlike nation, from conquest to conquest.

A multitude so great, subsisting in a desert so long, in a manner so singular, could not but attract the notice of all the adjacent nations, who must have been anxiously solicitous which way their route was directed.

and where they were to attempt a settlement at length. Being arrived at the border of the wilderness, where it is contiguous to the country of the Amorites; not imagining that any part of their inheritance was to be allotted them on this side Jordan; they petition Sihon, the king of the country, to grant them leave to pass peaceably through his territories, to the place of their destination. This he roughly refuses, and, without waiting to see whether Israel meant to attempt a passage by force, he collects his whole strength, advances into the wilderness to attack them, and thereby hastens on his own fate; for his army is smitten with the edge of the sword, and his whole land falls an easy prey to the victor. Og, king of Bashan, is rash enough to follow his example, provokes his own destruction, is subdued in his turn, and the fertile plains over which he reigned swell the triumphs of Israel.

Advancing forward to Jordan, they pitch their camp in the plains of Moab. This nation was descended from Lot, the nephew of Abraham, by an incestuous commerce with his elder daughter. They had long before this been reduced into a regular form of civil government, that of monarchy, and were living in the quiet possession of a fruitful country, secured to them by the appointment of Providence, in consideration of their relation to their venerable ancestor: and Israel was expressly prohibited to disturb them, or their brethren and neighbours, the children of Ammon, the posterity of Lot by his younger daughter, in the possession of their inheritance. The report of their victories, however, over Og and Sihon, has roused the attention and the jealousy of Balak king of Moab. Instead of employing the rational policy, of courting alliance and friendship with a people so formidable, and who were neither disposed nor permitted to molest them; or of adopting the manly policy of repelling bold invaders by open war, he has recourse to the mean, timid and contemptible arts of necromancy or divination.

For this purpose he sends messengers to Balaam, the son of Beor, a noted inchanter of those times, with large money in their hands, styled in scripture "the rewards of divination," and "the wages of unrighteousness," and a message to this purpose: "Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me. Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed," Numb. xxii. 5, 6. Thus Providence fulfilled the words of the oracle, pronounced in the song of Moses thirty-eight years before, immediately on the passage of the Red Sea; "Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them: all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them: by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone," Exod. xv. 15, 16. Now the person to whom Balak applied on this trying occasion, was a man of a very extraordinary character, and of very singular gifts and abilities. He seems to have united qualities, the most dissimilar and opposite. He exhibits in his language and conduct, a very uncommon combination and contrast of virtues and vices. What can exceed on the one hand, the generosity and disinterestedness which he expressed and put in practice, when repeatedly urged to employ his prophetic sagacity or magical skill against Israel? "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more," Numb. xxii. 18. What can equal on the other, the vile prostitution, for hire, of his great talents in the service of an idolatrous prince, against the people whom he knew to be favoured and protected of Heaven? We see him this day seeking and enjoy-

ing the most intimate communion with the living and true God; and to-morrow recurring to the practice of infamous and infernal arts, to accomplish a most detestable and diabolical purpose: proclaiming at one time, in language which the spirit of wisdom and prophecy alone could inspire, the security, glory and happiness of that people whom God delighted to honour; and, with the very next breath, insidiously suggesting counsels, which directly tended to destroy that security, to tarnish that glory, and to dissolve that happiness. In a word, we behold him fully impressed with the importance of a holy life, in order to a peaceful and happy end, and yet living in the commission of the most flagrant enormities, and prematurely cut off, with all his imperfections on his head; cleaving to the last to the mammon of unrighteousness, and yet sufficiently impressed with the loveliness of true goodness to pray in these words, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Numb. xxiii. 10.

For the further clearing up of this very singular character and history, it may be of importance to observe that though the descendants of Abraham for many ages after the death of that patriarch, were distinguished as the peculiar people of God, to whom were committed the lively oracles, and "to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises," Rom. ix. 4, yet scripture permits us not to consider all divine knowledge as confined to that people, previous to their establishment in Canaan. The dispersion from the wild attempt of Babel, necessarily conveyed in every one of its fragments some knowledge of the nature, will and worship of the God of their fathers; which, though in process of time obscured by tradition and forgetfulness, and disfigured by human invention, must still have retained somewhat of both its original form and substance. The

example and instructions of so good a master, and a neighbour so respectable as Abraham himself, could not but have a sensible effect on his numerous domestics, who were of various countries, and upon the princes with whom he came into connexion; and for this very end probably it was, that Providence kept him wandering from place to place. By means of their intercourse with Abraham, we know that Pharaoh and Abimelech attained at least a certain degree of acquaintance with the true God. We find, in like manner, Job, at whatever period he lived, and his three friends, in Arabia, and particularly Elihu of the kindred of Ram, discovering very profound knowledge in divine things; and Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, in the land of Midian, appears evidently to have possessed the same advantage. It is not therefore matter of very great surprise, that Balaam, a stranger and an enemy to the commonwealth of Israel, should enjoy this advantage in common with many of his neighbours, and that he should have made such an indifferent use of it: this, alas! being the misery of multitudes, who are favoured with a still clearer light than he was. Neither will it excite wonder, if we find superstitious and idolatrous rites gradually blending with the worship of the great Jehovah. Laban, though not to be set down as wholly given to idolatry, long before the period now under review, had his Teraphim, or household gods, which he highly prized, either as objects of religious veneration, or on account of the precious materials of which they were composed. And this too will in part account for that strange mixture which we find in the character of Balaam, his sudden transition from the acknowledgment of the God of Israel, to a participation in the profane rites employed in the worship of the idols of Balak and Moab.

But, notwithstanding this odious and abominable mixture, we observe in more than one instance, the

great God winking at these times of ignorance, and condescending to make known his will, even to men who were daily insulting him by their abominations, as in the case of Pharaoh and Abimelech already mentioned, as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, the grossest of idolaters, many ages afterwards, and in the case before us. All this leads to make an obvious and an important distinction, between the extraordinary gifts and the graces of God's Spirit. It is one thing to have a clear, enlightened head, and another, to have an affectionate and obedient heart. It is a blessed union where they meet, but the former without the latter only renders wickedness more conspicuous, and condemnation more just. The charge, alas! does not stop at wicked, covetous Balaam; it was matter of complaint down to the days of Micah, and of prophets of a different description. "The heads" of God's people judge "for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets divine for money." And our blessed Lord, to level all confidence in the possession of the choicest gifts, assures us, that many shall say to him in the great day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity," Matt. vii. 22, 23.

We observe farther, that though God was sometimes pleased to bestow the gift of prophecy upon the unworthy, the prediction, though uttered by unholy lips, was the truth of God, which no weakness, perverseness, nor disinclination of the prophet was able either to alter or suppress. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," 2 Pet. i. 21. They spake under an irresistible impulse; they spake sometimes what they understood not, and what they would have concealed, if they could. Thus

Caiphas, the avowed enemy of our blessed Lord, uttered a notable prophecy concerning him, not knowing what he said. Thus Jeremiah, disgusted with the ill success of his preaching, finding the word of the Lord made a reproach and a derision daily, by the thoughtless men of his generation, resolved not to make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. "But," says he, "his word was in mine heart, as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." And Josephus, in perfect consistency with the character of Balaam, as drawn by Moses, puts into his mouth this address to the king of Moab, who upbraided him with breach of agreement, in pronouncing the warmest of benedictions, where he was expressly hired to curse. "Can you imagine, that when prompted by the Spirit of God to disclose futurity, it depends on us to be silent, or to speak out? He makes our voices the vehicles of his will, without permitting us a choice in the matter. I well remember for what purpose the joint entreaties of you and the Midianites have brought me hither. I have undertaken this journey with a fixed determination to favour your earnest wishes; but God is more powerful than the bent of my inclination, which aimed at the gratification of your desires. For when he takes possession of our minds, he occupies them wholly, and leaves us nothing of our own. I had nothing less in my intention, than to trumpet the praises of this mighty host, or to display the blessings which God has in reserve for this favoured race. But being graciously disposed towards them, and determined to exalt them to the highest pinnacle of glory and felicity, He suggested to me the predictions which I could not but utter."*

Sometimes the representation of some dreadful punishment, to be instantly inflicted, if they dared to

*Joseph. Antiq. lib. IV. cap. IV.

falsify the oracle committed to them, might serve as a curb to their own natural and unruly propensities, and, sometimes carried wholly out of themselves, they delivered in an extacy, what was committed to them, unconscious of what they said or did. In the prosecution of the history, we shall find Balaam under both these kinds of inspiration; both awed by fear, and wrapt into the vision of futurity, in a trance.

I only make one observation more, for the clearing up of this remarkable story. It was a generally received opinion among the Gentile nations, that prophets, or diviners, had a power, by means of incantation, to inflict or to remove public calamities; that they understood the art of decoying from among their enemies the tutelar deities who presided over them; in consequence of which, they were easily and certainly discomfited. Homer makes the capture of Troy to depend on the removal of the sacred image of Minerva from its residence in the citadel of that metropolis: and Joshua himself, in the conquest of Canaan, takes advantage of this vulgar prejudice, to encourage his men to proceed to victory; and to prevent the ill effects of the timid and terrifying report of his colleagues, respecting the strength of the country. "Rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not," Numb. xiv. 9. It was accordingly usual, on undertaking military expeditions, to nerve the arm, and to whet the sword of the soldier, by the tongue of the priest, and the tremendous forms of religion. They attempted to make the gods parties to their quarrels, and devoted to perdition the nations against whom they waged war. An ancient author has transmitted to us the form of execration employed on such occasions, which, on account of its relation to our subject, perhaps you will have the curiosity to hear. It is a perfect contrast to the blessing which

Balaam was obliged, reluctantly, to pronounce upon Israel. The priest destined to this awful employment, after presenting the usual sacrifice, advanced to the head of the army, and in the presence of the general and principal officers, pronounced aloud words to this effect. "Almighty Father of gods and men, or if thou wouldst rather be addressed by the name of Jupiter, or if any other appellation be more grateful to thine ear; pour out, I conjure thee, upon this army," or "this city," according as the case required, "the spirit of terror and dismay: deprive of the sight of their eyes, all those who shall level their blows at us, our legions or troops, spread darkness over our enemies, over their cities, over their fields, over their armies. Look upon them as a thing accursed: bring them under the hardest conditions that ever an enemy was constrained to undergo. As for me, to destruction I hereby devote them; my curse I pour upon them, and take this prince, these captains, this people, to be witnesses to it."* This ceremony being performed, and the soldiers inspirited by the sanctions of religion, they advanced to the combat, in confidence of success.

It was for a purpose of this kind, that Balaam was now sent for by the confederated powers of Moab and Midian. How the latter of these two nations had been induced to join in such an embassy, we are not informed. The middle forty years of his life, Moses had spent among that people; had formed alliance with them by marrying the daughter of Jethro, one of the princes of the country, with whom he maintained a most friendly correspondence, after he was raised to the command of the armies of Israel. He cannot, therefore, be suspected of forming a hostile design against his ancient hosts and relations; and it was much more natural for them to form an alliance with a man of Moses' well known wisdom and moderation, and with a people

* Mocrab Saturnal. lib. III. cap. IX.

so sensibly favoured of Heaven as Israel was, than with a nation of idolaters, and a prince, who was reduced to employ the poor arts of incantation against his enemies. But, in many cases it happens, that, aiming at an over-refined wisdom and policy, men prove themselves fools. Jethro was probably by this time dead, and the Midianitish estate was governed by councils, very unlike those which would probably have been suggested by that wise and good man: and a deputation of their princes joins those of Balak, in application to Balaam, to strengthen their united forces, by laying Israel under a curse.

It is melancholy to think that from the beginning to this day, men have been more eager to bring mischief upon others, than to procure good to themselves. Had these Midianites and Moabites associated together to strengthen their borders, had they invited a prophet to come and confirm their bands of alliance, and encourage the hearts of their soldiery, by pronouncing a blessing upon themselves, they had not been reprehensible; but such is the corruption and malignity of the human heart, that it not only takes pleasure in the evil that befalls another, where our own interest is concerned, but in the very mischief that is wrought for mischief sake. The great evil is, men engage in transitory pursuits as if they were immortal; and had they the power, together with the inclination, would prosecute momentary offences with everlasting punishments. What is it to one nation that another great nation be utterly exterminated, provided a favourite scheme of ambition, commerce or revenge be thereby promoted! When we hear a poor wretch, a common curser and swearer, on the most frivolous occasions, imprecating eternal damnation on his fellow-creature, we are filled with horror; and yet without surprise, we behold religious sects in their zeal, and mighty empires in their pride and fury, deliberately doing the same thing. What principle so important

to individuals and to states, as a principle of true religion! It is a comforter in affliction, a counsellor in darkness and uncertainty, a refuge in danger and distress; a support in death. What so seductive and mischievous as an erroneous principle of this sort! "If the light that is in men be darkness, how great is that darkness?" False religion is a wandering fire of the night, hurrying men over a precipice; plunging them in the gulph—pretending to bring a tribute of glory to God, by destroying mankind. It is the spirit of the great enemy of God and man, who is a liar and a murderer from the beginning.

It is the perilousness of the times that has tossed Balaam into notice, and consequence and infamy. In a quieter period, he had floated unnoticed on the surface, and silently increased the paltry gains of his black art, by playing on the credulity of silly women and children. But the old wizard has had the good fortune to attract the notice of princes, and has the opportunity of selling his magical spells at his own price; and he fails not to make the most of his market. With the clue afforded us in scripture, we will attempt in another Lecture, to follow the various turnings and windings of that profoundest, darkest, most intricate of all labyrinths, a carnal, covetous heart. We conclude the present with calling upon you:

I. To remark and to revere the righteous judgment of God, in giving up to strong delusion those who seek and follow delusions. Every deliberate violation of God's law, every victory which a man gains over his own conscience, becomes his punishment, as it is his crime. Let not him who has wilfully deceived himself, in the first instance, pretend to complain that he has been hurried into mistakes which he never intended, but could not avoid. The *first* wrong step was in his power, but not the *fourth* or the *fifth*. The man needed not, unless he chose, to have set himself a running down a steep place; but, once in motion, it is not in

his power to stop when he would. If therefore he plunge into the flood, beneath, the fault is in himself, not the laws of motion, which only carried on what his own will had begun. The man who has destroyed his faculties by excess, must not charge his bad memory, his erroneous judgment, or the inconveniences in which they have involved him, upon nature, or the God of nature. No, they only establish the work of his own hands. In this view, it is perfectly just, that “to him who hath should more be given, and from him who hath not, even that which he hath should be taken away.”

II. Let us rejoice that we have a clear and “sure word of prophecy,” to direct and assist us in every doubtful and difficult case; and that “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” The gift of prophecy was not always a blessing to the possessor; and, as the mere knowledge of future events, it would be the reverse of a blessing. In tender mercy and in loving kindness, God conceals futurity from men. But all that pertains to the acquisition of wisdom, and the attainment of happiness; all that assures us of life and immortality, and makes us meet for the enjoyment of it, the words of this prophecy fully unfold. “The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above): or who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach: that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved,” Rom. x. 6—9. To know but this, is more than to “speak with the tongues of men and of angels”—is more than to “have the gift of prophecy, and to understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and to have all faith, so

as to be able to remove mountains." "Covet earnestly the best gifts:" but rather cultivate the fruits of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law," Gal. v. 22, 23.

III. While we admire the wisdom and goodness of God, in counteracting the intention of wicked Balaam, and turning the curse in his mouth into a blessing, let us bow the knee in gratitude to that great Prophet, who has fully, and for ever, done away the curse; let us give glory to "God, who hath sent his Son Christ Jesus to bless every one of us, in turning us from our iniquities;" and to introduce us into more than an Eden, more than a Canaan, even into the paradise of God; where there is "no more curse"—where "God shall wipe all tears from our eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away," Rev. xxi. 4.

IV. While we behold the madness of the prophet—a heart hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, let us tremble to think that the seeds of this very sin are implanted deeply in our own nature; that they have even discovered their baleful shoots; that they bring forth fruit unto death. Every plant which our heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be plucked up and rooted out; and this is one of them. Look to it carefully, O man: watch it with a holy jealousy. It is "the root of all evil." "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever," 1 John ii. 1—17.

HISTORY OF BALAAM.

LECTURE XIV.

And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.—NUMB. xxii. 21.

THE eagerness which men discover in pursuing the objects of time and sense, is a melancholy contrast to their coldness and indifference respecting the things of God and eternity. The carnal mind needs but a hint to attach itself to the pursuit of riches, pleasure or honour; and when engaged, no argument is of weight sufficient to dissuade; no danger intimidates, no difficulty discourages. The understanding becomes the dupe of the passions, conscience is led hoodwinked by appetite, and the man is shamefully sunk in the brute. But the alarm must be louder than thunder, which awakens the thoughtless, the sensual and the selfish to serious reflection; and it must be repeated every hour, else they will slumber and sleep again.

Water has in its natural coldness a tendency to congeal; and, once reduced to ice, has no principle in itself to recover from that torpid state. The cause of change must come from without. To dissolve and restore it to its liquid state, the sun must shine, the wind must blow; withdraw the action of air and fire, and it will gradually freeze again. In like manner, without any cause from without, the human body, by

a principle of corruption within itself, must speedily dissolve and be destroyed; and the human mind, by a similar internal principle of moral corruption, degenerates from depravity to depravity, till, lost to shame, fear, remorse, and, at length, to feeling, men come to commit iniquity with greediness, and to glory in their shame. To preserve the body in life, there must be constant supplies of nourishment administered; and to preserve the soul in health, there must be "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little."

It is truly affecting to see men enlightened and persuaded, yet wedded to their lusts; clearly informed of the right path, but wilfully and deliberately persisting in error; hardening themselves against God, and yet thinking to prosper; acknowledging God in words, but in works denying him.

These observations are all strikingly exemplified in the character and conduct of Balaam, of which we attempted to give you a general idea in the last Lecture, and to which were added some observations tending to elucidate his singular history. We are now to enter on the particular detail of it, as it is delivered in the sacred record.

The Israelitish nation was now in the last year of their peregrination through the wilderness; their civil and religious government were fully settled, and the theocracy finally established. They were now approaching the banks of the Jordan: and by their number, order and discipline, striking terror into all the neighbouring nations. Two kings, their armies and their people, have already fallen before their victorious arms; and nothing is left to oppose their progress to Canaan, but the river, the boundary itself of the promised land. They pitch their camp quietly in the plains of Moab, expecting the signal from their divine leader and commander to pass over, conquer, and take possession. Their warlike array and recent successes,

have alarmed the apprehensions of Balak, king of Moab, as their prosperity and prospects had excited his envy and jealousy. Diffident of his strength, either to repel invasion, if attacked by so powerful an adversary, or to attack them first, and endeavour to obstruct their progress, he enters into an alliance with the people of Midian, for their mutual security and defence. And even then, still doubtful of the force of their united arms, they agree to employ the arts of divination in aid of the sword, and dream of conquering by the power of enchantment, those whom they were afraid to encounter in the field. To such base, such wretched shifts do princes and nations resort, to gratify pride, ambition or revenge. For this purpose, they send a joint embassy to Balaam, the son of Beor, a noted soothsayer in the neighbourhood.

Balak and Moab had degenerated from the faith of Lot, their forefather, and were sunk into idolatry; it is therefore no wonder to see them of a jealous and hostile spirit towards Israel, their brother. A principle of religion, consisting in the fear and love of God, is the great bond of union among men; it strengthens the ties of natural affection, and even conciliates friendship between enemies; but irreligion, or what is worse, an erroneous principle of religion, turns men loose against each other, dissolves society, and fattens the earth with human blood. We cannot help recollecting, alas! that Abraham and Lot, the uncle and nephew, the progenitors of the two nations, were under the necessity of separating from each other, on account of their increasing wealth; and we see, many years after they were laid in the dust, the self-same cause, whetting the spirits and the swords of their posterity, and arming them for their mutual destruction. The whole world is a possession too scanty for avarice and ambition; the success of one seems to be a diminution of the happiness of another; and even the immense ocean is crimsoned with gore, that one may enjoy sole

and sullen empire; as if that vast space could not accommodate the operations of two tribes of ants on yonder mole-hill. Blessed world, where envy and strife shall rage no more; where there is bread enough and to spare, room enough and to spare; where the felicity of every one is an accession of felicity to every one!

Balaam is described in scripture by his parentage, his country and profession. He was the son of Beor, or Bosor, the difference of which pronounciation is accounted for, from the difference of dialect in the oriental languages. The father exists to us only in his name, and in the history of his son: and happy had it been for that son, to have left behind him nothing too but a mere name, instead of one loaded with infamy and detestation. Pethor, the place of his residence, was a city of Haran, or Mesopotamia, the very country where Abraham himself was born, and where he resided till his seventy-fifth year; the native country of Rebekah, the wife of Isaac; the country where Jacob passed a great part of his youthful years; where he married; where all his children, except Benjamin, were born, and whence he obtained the name of a Syrian. Pethor was situated on the river Euphrates, called *the* river, by way of eminence or distinction, it being the largest in the country; and thence, in many passages of scripture, styled the *great* river. The country adjacent, to a vast distance, being plain, it was favourable to the observation of the heavenly bodies; and accordingly we find the science of astronomy was early cultivated there; and the pretended science of astrology, that is, the power of foretelling future events, from the appearances and supposed influence of the stars, was speedily grafted upon it. Pride, presumption, and a little knowledge, soon arrogated to themselves a power of controlling these great luminaries, which seem in perpetual motion to encompass our earth, and of suspending or altering their influen-

ces; and ignorance, superstition and credulity easily admitted the insolent claim, and resorted to it. This was apparently the profession of Balaam, for in the book of Joshua he is expressly termed "the sooth-sayer." It was probably to his skill and power as an astrologer, that Balak had recourse for assistance against Israel, and when we come to his prophecy itself, shall meet with some, and these not obscure, allusions to that art.

The messages put into the mouths of these ambassadors, is strongly expressive of terror and consternation. "There is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me," Verse 5. The dreadful plagues inflicted on Egypt, in effecting Israel's deliverance, had been heard at the distance of Moab; and though forty years have elapsed, they are neither forgotten, nor have lost their impression. Fear ever magnifies its object; "they cover the face of the earth:" the word is, the *eye* or *sight* of the earth; their tents extend so far, that the earth and they seem to have one limit, and they are marshalled so close, that no ground can be seen. Another image, strongly expressive of the same passion, is that in the fourth verse. "Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field." "Lick up," it is the same word which is used 1 Kings xviii. 38, to express the action of devouring fire. "Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench," 1 Kings xviii. 38. The ox, as he feeds calmly and stately along, employs his tongue only, and the grass perisheth without pushing with the horn, or stamping with the foot, actions that denote strength and exertion, but by the easy motion of a soft and pliant film of flesh, he sweeps away all before him; thus easily and certainly, Balak

apprehends, was Israel advancing to his and his people's destruction.

And how was this approaching plague to be resisted or averted? "Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land; for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed," Verse 6. We have here an assemblage of all the baser and more contemptible passions of the human mind, called forth and led on by the predominant one of fear: a low, grovelling superstition, expecting from magical spells, what ought to have been sought for from wisdom and valor: unprovoked violence and cruelty, in seeking the destruction of a people, who were dwelling peaceably by him, and who had given such strong and recent proof of their moderation, in submitting to a tedious and difficult march round the whole land of Edom, rather than offend an unkind brother, who had refused a passage through his land, which they could easily have cut with the sword: and unmanly, abject adulation of a vile wizard, whom he supposed capable of serving his turn. On the other hand, the two great leading passions of Balaam's soul, vanity and covetousness, were likely to be gratified to the full. How would his heart exult, to see a train of princes standing at his gate, and presents worthy of kings to bestow, poured down at his feet! A prophet indeed, would have known from the beginning, that the application was nugatory, and that it must come to nothing; and an honest man would have rejected it with firmness, and persevered in that rejection. But we see his heart is won from the first moment, and all that follows is a wretched struggle between inclination and conscience, in which the former, at length, carries off the victory.

He receives the messengers with great courtesy, and

accommodates them in his house; for even a miser can be hospitable, if he be sure of gaining by it. Abraham's servant, followed by a camel loaded with the good things of Canaan, can easily force open the doors of such a man as Laban, or Balaam. He affects an air of great mystery; he cannot give his response immediately. Night, the season of incantation and dreams, must intervene; and, horrible to think, the great and dreadful name of Jehovah is interposed, to sanction and conceal the wicked purposes of a heart hunting after its covetousness; and he promises to report in the morning the result of his consultation. How faithfully the report was made, the sequel will show.

It appears, on the face of the history, that God waited not for an application from Balaam, concerning this business, but whether in a dream, a vision, or by a voice, prevented him, with an inquiry concerning the deputation from Moab. In many instances, Jehovah is represented as drawing information from men's own mouths, of what evidently lay revealed to his all-seeing eye, and thus making their folly and wickedness to expose, reprove, and condemn themselves. "And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee?" Verse 9. This question must have put the prophet into great agitation. Awful is the voice of the Eternal, at whatever season, in whatever form, and on whatever occasion it is heard! How awful then to a bad man, harbouring an ill design, shutting wilfully his own eyes, and yet flattering himself, and saying, Doth God see, and is there knowledge with the Most High? That he considered the very question as ominous, and fatal to the cause of his avarice and vain-glory, is evident from the circumstantiality of his answer. It discovers a soul tremblingly alive to the voice of interest: it is minute and particular, as if, by a parade of words, he could deceive his Maker into an approbation of his purpose and desire. What then must have been his chagrin and disappointment, when

a prohibition, so peremptory and positive, in a moment blasted all his prospects of gain and preferment!

“And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed,” Verse 12. The application had two objects in view, permission to go into the land of Moab, and liberty to curse the children of Israel, and both meet with a flat denial. He must not accompany the ambassadors to him who sent them; neither must he, either at home or abroad, in this place or in that, presume to curse, or in any shape whatever to molest that people. And, as if the sternness of interdiction had not been sufficient, a reason is assigned, “for they are blessed.” The commandments of God, in general, are so clear, that it is impossible to misunderstand them; it is not ignorance, but presumption, that ruins mankind.

Balaam, however reluctant, must next morning deliver an account of the night’s success; and we find he does it in a very partial and imperfect manner. When he reported the message of Balak to God, having to do with the great Searcher of hearts, with whom disguise avails nothing, he is accurate and distinct; but in carrying back the answer of God, having to do with men, who know no more than he had a mind to communicate to them, he delivers it in terms calculated only to stimulate the eagerness of the king of Moab, by encouraging a hope that something might be extorted, by dint of importunity and perseverance; or, that perhaps he might be allowed to do that at a distance, which he might not do by a nearer approach. The command was clear and full, “Thou shalt not go with them;” but in the mouth of Balaam it is mutilated and perverted: “the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you,” Verse 13. This satisfies Balak at once, that the prophet’s good will was with him; that it was not from want of inclination that the messengers returned without him; and, he justly concludes, that

with such a proportion of the man on his side, it would not be difficult to make the rest to follow.

The father of lies himself will speak truth, when it makes for his purpose; and Satan will quote scripture, if he can but deceive by it; as in his temptation of our Saviour in the wilderness. But then there is always some material circumstance disguised, perverted or suppressed: and thereby a different meaning is conveyed from what was intended. The word of God, then, is handled deceitfully, not only when it is wrested, and made to speak a language not its own, but when any part of the truth is purposely, artfully and wilfully concealed; and he “who shuns to declare the whole counsel of God,” is equally criminal with him who presumes to deliver, as the word of God, what wants the stamp of his authority. Balaam simply relates, that he is not permitted to go; not a syllable of the prohibition to curse Israel, nor of the reason assigned for that prohibition.

As the message lost much by the way between God and the princes of Moab, from Balaam's manner of rehearsing it; so it looses still more between Balaam and their master, from their mutilated and partial report: so that by the time it reaches Balak, an entirely different turn and meaning is given to it. The words of the oracle are, “Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed,” Verse 12, rehearsed by Balaam, “the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you,” Verse 13, reported by the ambassadors, “Balaam refuseth to come with us.” Verse 14. Thus, by the alteration of a few circumstances, even without a direct violation of truth, by passing through a very few hands, a proposition is made to contradict itself: and if we add to the easiness of varying facts, by varying phrases, and modes of expression; the difference still more easily made, by the infinite diversity of tones, looks and gesture, we shall not be surprised to find, what fre-

quently happens, a man made to say diametrically the reverse of what he did say, and what he intended.

Balak having received this answer as the prophet's, with great colour of reason, considers it as a mere artifice, employed with a view to raise his price and importance; and he hopes to conquer Balaam's reluctance, by assiduity, perseverance, presents and flattery: for both good and bad men judge of others by themselves: and apprized, it would appear, of Balaam's weak side, ambition and avarice, he despatches a second embassy, consisting of a greater number of persons, and of still higher rank, with this weighty and importunate address: "Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: for I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people," Verse 16 17. How flattering all this to a worldly, selfish mind! Balak puts a chart blanche into his hands; leaves him to name his own terms. All the honour which a king could bestow, all the wealth of Moab is before him; the very things which his soul lusted after. Blessed Jesus, thou chief of the prophets, even the prince of this world, the chief of tempters, when he came, found nothing in thee! found no weak side, no vulnerable part. The kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, dazzled not thine eyes: to the loudest calls of nature thou turnedst a deaf ear. The applause of men thou didst despise; thou soughtest not thine own glory, but the glory of Him that sent thee: thy "meat and drink was to do the will of Him that sent thee."

Balaam had now been at the summit of his wishes, but for a stern, pointed command of God; which, like a drawn sword, hung by a single hair over his head. Shocking dilemma! he is goaded on by desire as impetuous as ever took possession of a proud and covetous mind; he is bridled in by a prohibition, as deci-

sive as words could make it. For a moment we are in hope that the good principle has got the ascendant, that the fear, if not the love of God, is shed abroad in his heart. Who could speak better? "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more," Verse 18. It is the very sentiment of chaste and virtuous Joseph, when solicited by temptation of a different sort. But here is the difference:—Joseph fled from temptation, and overcame: Balaam tampered with it, and fell. Even the worst of men feel themselves under a necessity, for their interest's sake, to save appearances; and something must be said, at least, to still the clamours of conscience. Unhappy man! steady, himself, to his own base and wicked purpose, he is weak enough to entertain the hope, that the great, the unchangeable Jehovah may depart from his. Thus deceiving himself, it is no wonder to see him attempting to deceive the king of Moab's messengers into the expectation of a response more favourable to their united wishes. Accordingly, he courteously invites them to lodge with him that night also; if, peradventure, there might be obtained a reversal of the decree.

And now the sable curtain is drawn, and Balaam is left alone, and no eye sees him but the all-seeing eye of God. Without waiting to be consulted, and the prophet, without doubt, was both afraid and ashamed to venture on this second rencounter, God again prevents him, and tacitly, though not directly, charges him with having invited this second application, in the face of a positive and decided answer. Balaam and Balak are both men of this world, and having one and the same spirit to govern them, they readily understand each other. Balaam evidently courts a second address; and Balak is not slow to pay it. Now, this is the very thing which gives so great and such just offence to a holy God—that two presumptuous, selfish wretches should presume to imagine, that the counsels

of Heaven could be shaken, in compliance with their humour or interest. “And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do,” Verse 20. The word might have been rendered, “*Seeing* the men have come to call thee. Balaam, thou hast carried, thus far, thy point. A more honourable embassy attends thee. Thy desire is to go: thou art unable to withstand the allurements of riches and honour: thou knowest the better course, but will pursue the worse. Well then, fulfil thy desire. I have declared my will, but thou preferest thine own. I have said, *Go not; curse not*; but the demon of gain, Mammon, says, *go and curse*. Obey him. Go, and take the consequence.” This is clearly the language of the permission given him to accompany the messengers. And can there be a clearer proof of the divine displeasure, than when God yields to men, and gives them their own way? “My people,” says God, “would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own heart’s lust: and they walked in their own counsels. O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries,” Psalm lxxxi. 11—14, The wickedness of the old world at length overcame the patience of God; and he said, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man:” and so they were left to eat and drink, to dance and to play; but when the waters of the deluge were at no great distance: and when God says, concerning a people, or an individual, “Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone;” short of hell, it is the worst that can befall them.

Balaam flattered himself and the Moabites, with hearing *more* from God; but, as the punishment of abusing the light he had, he hears *less* than before;

and the vision is obscured to the man who had wilfully shut his own eyes. He was formerly forbidden either to go, or to curse. He is now, at his peril, allowed to go: but should he be so rash as to proceed on so slender a warrant, he is, at his peril, warned to walk by the instructions which should be given him. How easily men believe, how promptly they obey, when the doctrine tallies with their prejudices; when the precept coincides with their inclinations or their interest. Balaam is weak, I ought to have said wicked enough, to imagine his way perfectly clear. Having carried, as he thought, one essential point, all the rest, he presumes, will follow of course. Who so quick-sighted as a covetous man pursuing his gain? And yet, who so stupid and dull, as the man whose eyes the god of this world hath blinded? Balaam is up betimes in the morning, equipped for his journey, on his way for the land of Moab. "For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light," Luke xvi. 8. And there, for the present, we shall leave him, with this melancholy, mortifying reflection—that a corrupted heart has infinitely greater power to pervert a sound understanding and a well-informed conscience, than an intelligent conscience and a clear head have to reform and purify a corrupted heart. If God permit, we shall continue the history next Lord's day. May grace and wisdom be granted us to make a proper use of it; and to God's holy name be praise. Amen.

HISTORY OF BALAAM.

LECTURE XV.

These are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet.—2 PET. ii. 15, 16.

THE ordinary powers of nature, if we consider them attentively, are no less wonderful in themselves, and are not less a proof of the power and wisdom of God, than those extraordinary gifts which have been bestowed, and those preternatural powers which have been exercised at particular seasons, and for special purposes; and which have excited the admiration and astonishment of one part of mankind, and the incredulity of another. That a company of illiterate men should suddenly, and without instruction or study, be endowed with the gift of readily speaking various languages, justly raises our wonder, and conveys to our minds a very lofty idea of that divine intelligence which can communicate such power unto men: but we overlook the wonder equally great, because it is continually occurring, of the common gift of speech, and the conveyance of thought by it; and the acquisition of language by means of letters and memory. That a dumb ass should speak with man's voice, and the dull ass reason, fills us with surprise, because the

instance is singular and unparalleled; but the gradual increase of the human body, the imperceptible expansion of the powers of the human mind, pass for a thing of course; though the hand of God be conspicuous in the one case as in the other. Nothing is incredible to them who know the scriptures, and the power of God: nothing is incredible to him who attends, with any degree of application, to the operations of his own mind; and to what, in the ordinary course of human affairs, is every hour pressing upon his observation.

In a crowded assembly, without the utterance of a single sound, by one glance of the eye, the inmost thoughts, the most secret emotions, shall, quick as lightning, be conveyed from soul to soul: and the stranger be unable to intermeddle with, to partake of, the sorrow or the joy. Let the veil of night be spread ever so thick, and the use of sight suspended, as if the eye-ball were extinguished, the vibration of a little film of flesh shall dissipate the gloom, and convey the accents of affection or of woe to the ear and the heart of sympathy. Place the diameter of the globe between my friend and me, by an art subtle as the magic spell, what I know and feel in the frozen regions of the north, shall flee on the swift wings of the wind, and touch his soul under the more clement sky of the opposite hemisphere. Knowing from experience all this to be true, history can record no fact, promise suspend before my eyes no future event too wonderful for me to believe. The omniscience, omnipotence, and infinite goodness of God once admitted, every difficulty vanishes. Is there any thing too hard for the Lord to perform? No: Then Sarah conceives a son at ninety years old; the dumb ass reproves the madness of his master; unlettered fishermen speak with tongues; the dead shall rise; all these things shall be dissolved, and "new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," shall be expanded, to endure for ever and ever.

Having premised these things, not altogether foreign, we trust, to our subject, we proceed to the farther prosecution of a history, as singular and as instructive, perhaps, as any in scripture.

Balaam having obtained what he was willing to believe the consent of God to his journey into the land of Moab, for we easily believe what we wish, loses not a moment in making preparation for it. He is mounted and on his journey by the first dawning of the day, as if afraid of prevention, by a revocation of the permission; ill at ease in his mind, but smothering conviction, in the exultation of having princes in his train, and in the prospect of all the riches and honour which confederated kings had to bestow. Scripture gives us the idea of a holy violence offered unto God, with which he is well pleased, and to which he graciously submits to yield; as when it is said, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Hence the commandment, "to strive to enter in at the strait gate," to wrestle and make supplication, "to pray always, and not to faint." But there is also suggested the idea of an impious, a presumptuous, and a fatal strife and contention with our Maker, in which, wo be to the man that prevails. Such was the violence which worldly-minded Balaam offered: and how could he think to prosper? God, justly displeased at his perseverance in a cause which he knew to be disapproved of Heaven, leaves him not long in uncertainty respecting his will.

The princes of Moab, it would appear, had now left him; and were proceeding with a quicker pace to apprise their master of the prophet's approach; and Balaam remains attended by only two of his own servants, when the angel of the Lord places himself in the way for an adversary against him. We shall find, in the sequel, the person styled the angel of the Lord, as in other places, so here, assuming the character, and exercising the prerogative of Deity: for

he it is that afterwards says, "The word that *I* shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak." We are to understand, therefore, by this designation, the mighty, the uncreated Angel, by whom God made the worlds, the eternal Word, which was in the beginning, which was with God, and which was God, and which, in the fulness of time, was made flesh, and dwelt among men: "And they beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," John i. 14. But never, till now, did he appear in the character of an adversary. We find him, on other occasions, appearing to direct the wandering, to protect the weak, and to succour the distressed; as in the case of Hager, Lot and Jacob: but the face of the Lord is set against them that do evil. And now behold him in the way to check the progress of pride, violence and covetousness. The great enemy, foe to God and man, is termed, by way of distinction, *the* adversary: but lo! that awful character is assumed by a very different being—by one, infinitely greater and mightier than him; whose wrath is infinitely more terrible; who has power to save and to destroy; and, if he takes upon him that form, it is still in consistency with his gracious characters of good and merciful: it is to humble the proud, to prevent and counteract the causeless curse; to disappoint malice, and make the purposes of revenge recoil upon itself: it is to support the friendless, to guard the innocent, and to relieve the miserable.

This formidable apparition was observed neither by the prophet nor his servants. Neither the natural vision of the latter, nor the extraordinary and supernatural sagacity of the former, discerned any thing, save empty space, where the dullest of brute animals descried the presence of Him, who makes all nature tremble at his nod; who "giveth understanding to the prudent, and to him that hath no might increaseth strength." Is not this a striking representation of

what daily comes to pass in the course of providence? We see men soaring in the clouds, with their eyes and imagination, while with their feet they stumble and fall into the ditch that is before them; possessing every kind of sense, except common sense: pretending to superior refinement, and yet stupid and gross, in the plainest and most essential things. Thus the simplicity of the gospel was "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness:" and on this very account, the condescending Saviour of mankind is represented as rejoicing in spirit, and saying, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight," Matt. xi. 25, 26. Thus God destroyeth the "wisdom of the wise, and brings to nothing the understanding of the prudent," 1 Cor. i. 19.

What an object of terror is here represented as obstructing the passage! An angel! The prince of angels, armed with a sword, and that sword drawn in his hand! What was the strength of Egypt, in that dreadful night, when one of his flaming messengers walked through the midst of it, and made all its first-born to bleed to death under his stroke? How easy had it been for that arm, with one stroke of that sword, to have put an end to the life and madness of the prophet! But he chose to employ a meaner instrument, and thereby to vindicate to himself higher praise.

There is a striking progress described in the mode of admonition and reproof, administered to the prophet by the successive actions of the dumb creature. First, "he turned aside out of the way and went into the field;" a plain intimation to his accustomed rider, that something extraordinary obstructed his path. Thus, in many passages of scripture, the common instincts of the dumbest animals, are employed to expose the greater thoughtlessness and folly of rational beings.

“Ask, now, the beasts,” says Job, “and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?” Job xii. 7—9. “Hear, O heavens,” says God by Isaiah, “and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider,” Isai. i. 2, 3. “Yea, the stork in the heaven,” saith God by another prophet, “knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord,” Jer. viii. 7. Thus, in the passage before us, a more indirect reproof was given to the eagerness and speed of Balaam, pricked on by the spur of covetousness and ambition, by the action of the ass, in deviating from the right path; and had not the eyes of his understanding been blinded by the wages of unrighteousness, this, without the vision of an angel, might have taught him that the way in which he went was perverse before God. But following only the blind impulse of a carnal mind, he wreaks, in reiterated blows upon the unoffending brute, the resentment which ought to have been levelled against his own rashness and presumption. Who was here most worthy of stripes? Let the adage of the wise man determine. “A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool’s back.”

Behold the patience and long-suffering of God. The ass, by dint of blows, is forced back again into the road, and the angel himself gives place and retires. Folly and obstinacy seem to have carried off the victory; but alas, how short is the triumph of impiety! If Omnipotence yield, it is only to meet the sinner on ground

more difficult and dangerous. The heavenly messenger now takes his stand in a place where there was no way to escape, "a wall on this side, and a wall on that," and a flaming sword, wielded by the arm of the great Archangel, in front, to oppose. There is no way of safety but in turning back and fleeing for life, and yet he will madly push on to his own destruction. When men are once engaged in a way that is not good, difficulty only stimulates their ardour; they rush on through danger to danger, till they involve themselves in inevitable destruction; according to the fearful progress described by the prophet—"Fear, and the pit, and the snare, shall be upon thee, O inhabitant of Moab, saith the Lord. He that fleeth from the fear, shall fall into the pit; and he that getteth up out of the pit, shall be taken in the snare: for I will bring upon it, even upon Moab, the year of their visitation, saith the Lord. They that fled stood under the shadow of Heshbon, because of the force: but a fire shall come forth out of Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sion, and shall devour the corner of Moab, and the crown of the head of the tumultuous ones," Jer. xlviii. 43—45.

The reproof now becomes more distinct and direct. The wretched animal, urged on by his furious rider, hemmed in with a wall on either side, and opposed in front as with a wall of fire, in making a desperate effort to pass by and advance, thrusts herself close to the wall, and crushes the prophet's foot. Thus slow, thus reluctant, is a merciful God to proceed to judgment. He first warns and threatens; then touches the extremities, if peradventure the sinner will take warning, and turn back; and not till all means have been tried and found ineffectual, he is provoked to strike the deadly blow that reaches the heart.

Mark on the other hand, by what dreadful degrees sinners harden themselves against God, till they become lost to feeling. The commission of one sin as naturally leads to another, as every step down a steep

place accelerates the speed of that which is to follow; and yet transgressors vainly imagine it is in their power to stop when they please, or to turn against the bias. One of the most fearful symptoms of a reprobate mind, is, when the very means of awakening, convincing and converting, serve as opiates to the conscience, and increase that insensibility which they were meant to cure. If the constitution of the patient be so vitiated as to convert medicine into poison, dissolution cannot be at a great distance. Affliction, that wholesome, though unpalatable potion, never leaves the mind exactly where it found it. A cure is either begun by it, or the distemper is confirmed. The history of Balaam is the illustration of this position. The pain of his foot has only served to whet the asperity of his disposition; and the more he is opposed, the more earnest he is to get forwards. O that the children of light were thus perseverant in a good cause, and not weary of well-doing.

It is astonishing that superstition, if not the fear of God, did not now turn him back. Surely never journey had a more ominous, inauspicious beginning: but the passions by which he was actuated, are among the last to be discouraged; on he drives, and the angel, in patience mixt with displeasure, continues to retreat, till at length the path becomes so narrow, that it was impossible to turn to the right hand or to the left, when the patient brute, wearied and wasted with stripes, and scared with the dreadful vision immediately before her eyes, at last sinks to the earth under her burthen.

This was the third stage of admonition and reproof. God first waves the flaming sword, but cuts not, shakes the rod, but smites not. That being disregarded, he puts forth his hand and smites the heel, but spares the vitals. He then proceeds to block up the way, that the sinner cannot pass; but is constrained to fall down before him. Humanity is shocked as we proceed. "The merciful man is merciful to his beast, but the tender

mercies of the wicked are cruel." Behold an old, simple, uncomplaining drudge expiring under the angry blows of her unkind master. The very stones of the field are ready to cry out, and to upbraid the hard-hearted, ungrateful wretch with his cruelty. "Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote her with a staff." In the history of the miracle which follows, a multitude of reflections crowd upon us. In the order and frame of nature, every creature of God has a special use and end; neither is there any schism, deficiency or redundancy, permitted in the great body of the universe. Every thing is in its place; every thing is fulfilling the purpose of its Creator; and therefore nothing ought to be mean or contemptible in our eyes. The great Lord of all exercises a tender concern about the lowest of the brute creation, provides for them, and resents the cruelty and injustice which are offered them. "He feeds the ravens," "the young lions ask their meat from God," "he careth for oxen," "a sparrow falleth not to the ground without our heavenly Father." And lo, the dull ass findeth compassion and an avenger, when under oppression, from him whom angels worship. Who so lofty as to be beyond his reach, as to defy his power? What so little as to be beneath his notice, or shut out from his pity? There is of consequence a return of attention and tenderness due from the human race to every order of creatures below themselves, and whose services, whatever their faculties may be, Providence permits them to employ either for pleasure or for use. The power and wisdom which stationed every creature in its proper place, and preserves it there, can at pleasure elevate it to a higher, or depress it to a lower sphere; can confer upon it a force unknown before, or deprive it of what it formerly possessed; can break the strength of Egypt, by an army of frogs or flies, or preserve Daniel unhurt in the midst of the lions; can catch the serpent in his own craftiness, and teach the dull ass speech and reason.

The cunning of Satan, and the understanding of man, look out for likely, promising and adequate instruments to carry on their designs. The wisdom of God chooses to execute his by such as are apparently weak, unpromising and inadequate. To seduce our first parents, the devil employed the agency of that creature which was the most sagacious of all the beasts of the field. The most stupid, in the hand of the Almighty, was sufficient to confound, and to convict, and to condemn, the proudest and most highly gifted of his race. And the gospel of Christ becometh effectual unto salvation, not through the wisdom of words, but by demonstration of the Spirit; for "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence," 1 Cor. i. 27—29.

Finally, for we must make an end of our reflections on the subject—What creature so brutish, as a rational being under the dominion of his lusts! The novelty of an ass speaking, reasoning, remonstrating, seems to have excited no astonishment in the furious prophet: he is not awakened to one sentiment of compassion, nor of godly fear, by a phenomenon so singular. The only regret he feels, is the want of a deadly instrument to prosecute his resentment to the full. Men most vainly, and in the face of experience, imagine, that such and such means of conviction would certainly work their effect. "Nay, but if one went from the dead they will repent;" but the truth is too well confirmed by every day's experience, to be called in question, that "if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead," Luke xvi. 31. A miracle greater than even opening the ass' mouth must be performed, be-

fore Balaam be persuaded. A heart wedded to gain, is not to be *reasoned* out of its favourite pursuit; and unbelief, do what you will, always finds a strong-hold whereto it can resort, and which it easily renders impregnable. "Show us a sign from heaven, and we will believe." Well, the very petulance of incredulity is humoured, the sign is exhibited, Satan is cast out. Surely they will now believe. No such thing. "This man casteth out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils." The eyes of Balaam are blinder, his heart more hard than the tongue of the ass is mute.

At length, God vouchsafes to effect that by a second miracle, which had been obvious to a tender conscience, much more to a prophetic eye, without any miracle at all; and the angel stands confest to the sight of the soothsayer, and clothed in all his terror. And now violence, ambition and covetousness stand for a while suspended, swallowed up of fear at this alarming sight. His eyes are no sooner opened to see with whom he had to contend, than he shuts them again in consternation and astonishment; "he bowed his head and fell flat on his face." What a miserable figure a haughty man makes when caught in the snare! How vain the expectation of fleeing from God, or of opposing him with success! How dreadful it is to meet as an adversary, Him whose counsels we have slighted as a friend! Balaam has now the unspeakable mortification of discovering that he owed the preservation of his life to the slender sagacity and discernment of the poor brute whom he had treated so unmercifully: and he is again assured, without reserve or disguise, that the design of this journey was highly odious and offensive to God. "Behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me: and the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive," Verse 32, 33.

But though intimidated and confounded, his heart

still cleaves to "the wages of unrighteousness." Disapprobation could not be expressed in clearer and stronger words, than had all along been employed, "thou shalt not go, thou shalt not curse," "I went out to withstand thee, thy way is perverse before me," and yet he has the assurance to make it a matter of doubt whether God were displeased with him or not. A conscience not quite callous, a heart not totally hardened like his, would have sought instantly to retreat, thankful that his presumption had not already cost him his life; but he cannot give up the hope of getting forward. "*If* it displease thee, I will get me back again," Verse 34. "*If* it displease thee." Could he doubt it? What kind of assurance would he have had? And yet, wonderful to be told, the angel continues once more to give way; and Balaam has still the hardness to proceed; and the issue proves the truth of the wise man's assertion: "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy," Prov. xxix. 1.

The history now hastens on to the meeting of Balaam and Balak; the one eager to prevail over his enemies, by the power of enchantment; the other to possess himself of the riches and honours of Moab. The one lays aside the state of a king, and advances to his utmost border, out of respect to his expected guest. The other, with more speed than became a prophet, hastens to partake of the prince's repast, little scrupulous whether the bill of fare consisted of things offered unto idols or not. But happily for Israel, God their protector, had put a hook in his nose and a bridle in his jaws. He himself feels and acknowledges it, however reluctantly. "And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say any thing? The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak," Verse 38.

The prophecy itself, one of the most beautiful passages in the sacred history, though uttered by profane

lips; and the power of God therein exemplified, in making the wrath of man to praise him, will furnish useful matter for another discourse. Let what has been said, be improved as a solemn warning to observe, regard and submit to the admonitions of God's word and providence. Wo be to that man who sees no angel standing in the way of a sinful career, till the angel of death stop him with his fatal dart. Let the checks of conscience be listened to. Has the hand, or the foot, been bruised, retreat in time. There is a lion in the way. He that proves too strong for his Maker, by a bold perseverance in an evil course, is only hastening forward his own destruction. The same person is the kindest friend, and the most formidable adversary.

God can find an instrument to punish, in the meanest and most contemptible creature; therefore despise none, abuse none. Be not weary in well-doing. Take an example from Balaam, in respect of perseverance; but choose an honester and worthier object of pursuit. Honour God with your superior reason and use of speech. Behold an ass wise, and a prophet mad: blush at thy own folly, and be humble.

Let us go, as has been already suggested, and learn wisdom from the brute creation. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib:" be instructed to acknowledge the hand that feeds thee: learn attachment to thy Protector, learn gratitude to thy Benefactor, repay kindness with kindness. Learn industry from the bee. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?" Prov. vi. 6—9. "The hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." "There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: the ants are a people not strong, yet

they prepare their meat in the summer; the conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks; the locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands; the spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces," Prov. xxx. 24—28. May God open our eyes, and dispose our minds to receive instruction from every thing around us; and preserve us from opposing his will; and make his way straight before our face.

HISTORY OF BALAAM.

LECTURE XVI.

Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!—
NUMB. xxiii. 10.

HUMAN conduct, as far as it is governed by the spirit of this world, exhibits a wretched and contemptible, but a dangerous and fatal opposition to the will of God. Men would be happy in their own way; but whether they succeed in their pursuits, or whether they fail, they find themselves miserable in the end. God is conducting us, if we would but be conducted, to real and substantial happiness, but it is through a narrow gate, and along a path in many places strewn with thorns. The prosperous successes of vanity and wickedness, like a sweet poison, may afford a transient pleasure in the moment of swallowing; but lasting and unutterable anguish immediately succeeds. The bowels are torn with pain insupportable, and the man dies, dies for ever, for the indulgence and gratification of one poor instant of time. But the sacrifices we are enabled to make to God, and to the testimony of a good conscience, are like a nauseous medicine, which by means of a short-lived disgust, rectifies the constitution, sweetens the blood, confirms health, and prolongs a happy existence. The grievousness of affliction in due season “yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby.”

In whatever way men choose to live, and very different are the roads which they take, they have but one idea, one wish, one prayer, in the prospect of death and eternity. When a man finds himself on the brink of the world of spirits, it will afford him but slender consolation, to reflect that he has lived long enough to amass a fortune, to enjoy a banquet, to attain a post of honour, to acquire a name. And he will feel as little pain and mortification, on the other hand, in recollecting that he has passed life in obscurity, that he has struggled with poverty, that he has endured unmerited reproach. But this is the folly and the misery of man; we eagerly imbibe and follow the spirit of this world while we live; and fondly dream of assuming, in one propitious instant, the spirit of heaven, when we come to die. We think of passing out thirty or forty years with the gay, the giddy, and the vain; as if that could be a preparation for an eternity with God, and angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. Our understanding and conscience are on the side of wisdom and piety; our passions and habits, and alas! they are more powerful, are of the party of dissipation and vice. "The fool says in his heart, there is no God;" and men reputed wise, live as if there were none.

The unhappy man, whose character is farther unfolded to us in the text, exhibits a most affecting example of this strange inconsistency and self-delusion. Who so enlightened as Balaam, "which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty?" Who so blind as the covetous prophet, who "loved the wages of unrighteousness," whose eyes the god of this world blinded? Hear him speak; the manna of heavenly eloquence falls from his lips: behold him act; and lo, a fiend from hell spreading snares and destruction. Under the control of God, not Moses himself thinks more affectionately, expresses affection more ardently towards Israel, than Balaam. Under the impulse of his own passions, not Satan could plot more

malignantly nor more effectually. As the prophet of God, who so warm a friend? As the counsellor of Balak, who so dreadful an adversary? In the prospect of death, who more devout? In life, who so profligate? In judgment and opinion, who so clear and sound? In practice, who so prostitute and abandoned?

In the face of a prohibition, the clearest and fullest that words could convey, through the difficulties and dangers of a journey the most eventful upon record, Balaam is now arrived at Balak's metropolis, *Kirjath-huzoth*, the city of streets. Greetings, such as may be supposed to pass between wicked and selfish men, being over, the sacrifice is offered up, and the banquet is prepared, according to the state of a king, and the sacredness and importance of his guest. The evening being passed in festivity, they retire to rest; and, early on the morrow, Balaam permits himself to be conducted by the Moabitish prince into the "high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost parts of the people." Here the cloven foot appears at once. Balaam was too intelligent to believe that Baal was any thing; that his sacrifices or high places were any thing: but Balak's gold being, indeed, the god whom he himself worshipped, it is to him a matter of the last indifference before what idol the superstitious monarch bowed. Reason and religion say, "What concord can there be between God and Belial; between him that believeth, and an infidel? Ye cannot serve God and mammon." But avarice will attempt any thing, submit to any thing, commit any thing; will adore the God of Israel, or bend at the altar of Baal, just as it serves the occasion. Balaam even volunteers in the service of the idol; feeds the superstition of Balak, which it was his duty to have corrected; and, as if there had been something potent and mysterious in the number, directs *seven* altars to be erected, and a bullock and a ram to be prepared for a sacrifice upon each of the seven.

Behold how soon the reproof of a speaking, reasoning brute, the terrors of the opposing angel, and the

admonitions of the heavenly vision, are disregarded and forgotten! Balak is deliberately suffered to remain the dupe of his own credulity: he is fed with the vain hope of triumph, in a way by which it could not be achieved; and an attempt is impiously made to aid him in an enterprise which Heaven had repeatedly condemned; and, dreadful to think, this is done under all the awful forms of a religious service; and a purpose too vile to be avowed, even to men, is presumptuously obtruded upon the great Jehovah, as if his determinations were to fluctuate with the vile interests and caprices of mortals. "The sacrifice of the wicked," saith the wise man, "is an abomination; how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind." The religion of God is, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." But the leading article of Balaam's creed is, "Gain is godliness:" hence he attempts to sanction cursing and cruelty, under the solemn ordinances of the blessed God.

We have observed formerly, without pretending to assign a reason for it, that the number *seven* is, through the whole of divine revelation, connected with many important ideas, institutions and events, in cases depending on the sovereign authority of the great God. This leads us to conclude, that it has a meaning and design, the knowledge of which is either lost to the world, or never has yet been revealed to man. It cannot be for nothing that it presents itself so often, and in so many forms, upon the sacred page. That God rested the seventh day from all his work, and sanctified it—that on the solemn day of the atonement, under the law, the blood of the sin-offering was sprinkled before and upon the mercy-seat seven times—that the altar of burnt-offering was consecrated by being anointed seven times with the holy oil—that the consecration of Aaron to the priesthood consisted of a service of seven days—that the leper was to be sprinkled, in order to purification, seven times; and after a separation of seven days, be admitted to his rank as a citizen—that every seventh year was ordain-

ed a year of rest, to the land of promise; and that a revolution of seven times seven years brought on the jubilee, or universal release—that seven priests, bearing so many trumpets, were commanded to begin the conquest of Canaan, by seven days encompassing Jericho; and that, upon the seventh circuit, and at the seventh blowing of the trumpet, the walls of that city should fall to the ground—that the like number of priests should be employed to precede and announce the removal of the ark, when David brought it home; and, not to multiply instances without end—that the Lamb, which John saw in vision in the midst of the throne, should be represented as having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, sent out into all the earth—that the book in the right hand of Him who sat upon the throne, should be sealed with seven seals—that in these, and so many more cases, which the careful reader of the scriptures need not have pointed out to him, the Spirit of God should see meet to press upon our minds, with such peculiar emphasis, this number of perfection, as it has been called both by Jews and Heathens, though we cannot account for it, leads to this pleasing conclusion—That there are in the word of God, many precious mines of knowledge, yet undiscovered; endless mysteries of wisdom, goodness and love, yet to be unveiled; depths of mercy, which the capacity of angels has not yet fathomed; heights of grace, to which the seraphim's wing hath not soared. It is imagination, merely, to suppose that the felicity of saints in bliss may consist in diving deeper and deeper into the plan of redemption; in tracing its progress, its history, to its consummation; in reading this wonderful book, with the veil removed from our eyes; to find in it all the stores of natural, moral and divine truth; in for ever learning, ever beginning to learn “the love of Christ which passeth knowledge?” I will indulge the dear, the delightful hope, that the period will come, when, taught of that Spirit, who is promised to “take of the

things of Christ and show them unto us," I shall discover, in this blest volume, ten thousand excellences to which I am now blind; ten thousand truths, of which I have at present no perception; ten thousand beauties I am now incapable of relishing. But to return.

It is no great wonder to find a man of so mixed a character as Balaam, employing altars and victims, according to a number and quality long before sanctified by the appointment of the true God. For all the rites of idolatry may easily be traced up to divine institutions. But what signifies the form, when the spirit and meaning is lost? Chemosh was the peculiar idol of the Moabites, as we learn from chap. xxi. 29, for *Baal*, that is, *lord*, was a general term, descriptive of the whole tribe of deities, and applied by every particular nation to its respective patron; yet we find Balak easily persuaded by Balaam to offer sacrifice to Jehovah. For they that have false notions of Deity, cannot be very difficult in their choice of a god; and Balak probably was so weak as to imagine, that by this piece of flattery and respect, the God of the Israelites might be decoyed from them, withdraw his protection, and give them up to the sword of their enemies.

Balaam, now the sacrifice was set on fire, directs the king to stand by it, in solemn expectation of its success; he himself withdraws to an "high place," or, he went *solitary*; probably to some adjoining clift of the rock, favourable either to meditation, or the practice of his enchantments; for observation of any preternatural signs that might be given, or for a clearer prospect of the camp to be devoted. Nothing astonishes me more than the boldness of this retreat. A diseased conscience seeks concealment from the eye of God in noise and a crowd. To what a pitch of insensibility has this man attained, who has the dreadful courage to go forth to meet an offended God in solitude! "And God met Balaam." In what manner we are not told, neither is it of any importance to know; but it is of importance to observe that "God's ways are not our

ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts.” Insulted in the same manner, what man but would have felt resentment, and have returned insult for insult! In nothing, Father of Mercies! is thy glorious superiority more conspicuous than in thy gentleness and patience. God is not a man, that he should be ruffled and discomposed, nor the son of man, that he should oppose vehemence to vehemence. The wrath of man provokes him not, the haste of man urges him not, the tardiness of man delays him not, the flattery of man sways him not.

Balaam has the confidence to advance a plea of merit for the service which he had performed, in erecting so many altars, and offering so many victims; but he has not the assurance to avow the motive, nor directly to prefer the request to which it plainly led. Without paying the least regard to the one or to the other, God, the great God, puts the word he would have spoken into Balaam’s mouth, and sends him back to pronounce it aloud in the ear of Balak, and his attendants. I see, with an honest satisfaction, the disappointed mortified enchanter, returning with downcast eyes, sullen and slow from the solemn meeting: his schemes of malignity checked and prohibited, all his prospects of ambition and avarice for ever blasted; cursing in his heart that inflexibility of purpose which he durst neither attempt to alter or oppose. I see the expecting monarch in the midst of his seven altars, all eye to watch the moment of the prophet’s return; eagerly anticipating his message from his looks, and all ear to hear it delivered in articulate sounds.

The emotions which filled the hearts of both, are to be conceived, not described, when the reluctant tongue of Balaam thus pronounced the immutable decree of the Holy Oracle, while the assembled princes of Moab listened with sorrow and disappointment. “Balak, the king of Moab, hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord

hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him; lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?" Chap. xxiii. 7—10.

The first reflection that naturally presents itself, on hearing these words, is one that has frequently occurred in the course of these exercises, and which it is impossible to repeat too often.—How wonderful, how tremendous, how irresistible the power of God, which has thus all matter, all spirit, at its disposal! which can make the dumb ass speak what naturally he cannot, and the mad prophet to utter what wickedly and perversely he would not: and "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings perfecteth praise." Mark how God brings to nought the counsel of the heathen; writes vanity upon the counsels of princes, and "maketh diviners mad." Thus said Balak; thus did the king of Moab; how poor and contemptible, compared to "Thus saith the Lord." "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, amongst the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Exod. xv. 9—11. Mark how the slow and reluctant prophecy of Balaam accords with the predictions of former times, and the history of periods yet to come. "Look up now," says God to Abraham, "toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be," Gen. xv. 5. And lo, the promise is more than fulfilled: it is infinitely exceeded by the accomplishment. "Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?" Look forward to the days of Solomon, when the glory of Israel was in its zenith, when the descendants of the men in the plains of Moab

were multiplied as the sand on the sea shore; and thence rise higher still, to a greater promise, to a better covenant, to the spiritual seed of faithful Abraham, increased to "a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands," Rev. vii. 9; encamped not in a fertile terrestrial plain, but expatiating through the vast regions of eternal day, and possessing, not a land flowing with milk and honey, but the pure and sublime delights of the paradise of God. How I envy Balaam the prospect from the top of the rock! A rich champaign country, skirted by the silver Jordan, meeting the distant horizon; the tents of Israel spread out like the trees in the forest, and covering an innumerable multitude; a whole nation of men beloved of God, and destined to conquest; the spacious tabernacle, the habitation of the Most High, expanded in the midst, and the cloud of glory, the unequivocal proof of the presence of the great King, resting upon it. How many objects to delight the eye, to swell the imagination, to elevate the soul! No wonder the tongue of envy was charmed from its purpose. But alas! the heart of malice and covetousness remains unchanged; a chest full of gold had been to Balaam a sight more enchanting. Place him in heaven, like Mammon, his father, according to the description of our great poet, his attention had been fixed but on one object:

"Mammon, the spirit least erect that fell
From heaven; for even in heaven, his looks and thoughts
Were always downward bent, admiring more
The riches of heaven's pavement, trodden gold,
Than aught divine or holy else enjoyed
In vision beatific."

The beautiful view beneath, therefore, was to Balaam what the conjugal bliss of our first parents in paradise was to Satan, according to the same great poet; who, beholding their pure and innocent affection, "turned aside for envy," and exclaimed:

“Sight hateful, sight tormenting! Thus these two,
Imparadis’d in one another’s arms,
The happier Eden, shall enjoy their fill
Of bliss on bliss, while I to hell am thrust;
Where neither joy nor love, but fierce desire,
Still unfilled, with pain of longing pines.”

It was a spirit and a situation not unlike to this, which suggested to the wicked prophet the words of the text; “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!” Verse 10. Unhappy Balaam! he descried from the top of the rocks goodly tents, in which he had no part nor lot; he discerned the happy estate of the righteous, but choose to be a partaker with the ungodly; he admired and envied the happy end of the people of God, but felt his own end approaching without hope; he saw and approved the beauty and loveliness of virtue; he persisted to the last, pursuing and cleaving to the wages of unrighteousness.

But what, I beseech you, could dictate this wish to Balaam? What but a strong and irresistible persuasion of the immortality of the soul, and an approaching unalterable state of rewards and punishments? What but a consciousness of having acted wrong, and the dreadful knowledge of his being accountable to a holy and righteous God? And is it really possible for reasonable creatures to fall into such a gross absurdity and contradiction? And can there exist such characters in the world? Let us bring the case home to ourselves. It is too evident to need a proof, that many indulge themselves in very unwarrantable practices, whose religious principles, notwithstanding, are exceedingly sound and just. Try them on the side of soundness in sentiment and opinion, and they talk and reason like angels from heaven: consider how they live, they are mere men of this world. They find a salvo for conscience, by making a sort of composition with their Maker, as some men find a salvo for their integrity,

by putting off their good-natured creditors with a certain proportion of their debt, when they are either unwilling or unable to pay the whole. And, with equal insolence and presumption, the one vainly imagines that his Creator and Lord, the other that his credulous friend may think themselves sufficiently satisfied with such partial payments as they think fit to render. Such of God's commands they will cheerfully obey; but as to others, why, they will make all the atonement in their power, the proud, the ambitious, the covetous, the dissolute, each in a way that shall not clash with his favourite pursuit. One will give his time, another his diligence, a third his money to God, just according as it is the article upon which he himself puts least value, and the conscious deficiency he attempts feebly to eke out, by faint hopes and half resolves, that some time or another he will exhibit a more uniform and thorough obedience to the will of God.

When the command is clear and express, to question and reason on the subject is rebellion. By this the allegiance of man in a state of innocence was assailed; and, listening to this, he staggered and fell: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" When temptation of this sort is once listened to, men will gradually come to doubt of every thing, and learn to explain away every thing. Deliberation and doubt in the face of "Thus saith the Lord," are dishonesty and impiety: and to attempt to get rid of one uneasy text of scripture, is a direct attack on the validity of the whole.

When we see a man so intelligent as Balaam, duped by his passions into a train of folly and wickedness so gross and palpable, let us look well to ourselves. The absurdities into which we fall, escape our own notice; but a discerning by-stander sees them, smiles at them, perhaps makes his advantage of them. If we are conscious of the influence of any very powerful propensity, or aversion, it is a just ground of suspicion, that we may be tempted to act unworthily; and it is a power-

ful admonition to watch our hearts narrowly on the side of that infirmity "which doth more easily beset us."

We see in the dying struggles of Balaam's conscience, a deep, a rooted concern about futurity: a concern which no one, let him say what he will, has been able to overcome. His ardent wish, "Let me die the death of the righteous," is the involuntary homage which vice pays to piety. Think what way, live what way men will, they have but one thought, one conviction, one prayer, when they come to die. After the pleasure or the advantage of a wicked action is over, who would not gladly get clear of the guilt of it? But this is the misery; the profit and pleasure quickly pass away, the guilt and pain are immortal. Could a lazy wish or two supply the place of virtue, all would be well: the conscience would go to rest, the "strong man armed would keep the house." But the very wishes of indolence and impiety betray their own flimsiness; and Balaam feels his own prayer falling back with an oppressive weight on his guilty head. Let us be instructed to mend it a little, and say with Paul, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's," Rom. xiv. 7, 8. "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Lord help us so to live, as to be raised above the fear of death. Let me fall asleep in the bosom of my heavenly Father, and I shall awake in perfect peace.

Happy, unspeakably happy, they, who in reviewing life, and in the prospect of death, can with holy joy and confidence adopt these words of the apostle, and say, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing," 2 Tim. iv. 6—8.

HISTORY OF BALAAM.

LECTURE XVII.

But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.—REVELATIONS ii. 14.

THE mystery of iniquity, which the human heart is daily bringing to light, is as strange and incomprehensible as any thing in the frame of nature, or in the conduct of Providence. In the first ages of a sinful career, a spectator could not conceive, the man himself cannot believe the desperate wickedness to which he may in time be brought. The latter end is so very unlike the beginning, that it becomes matter of astonishment how the same person could possibly be so much changed, and by what steps the man was gradually transformed into the devil. Scripture represents to us a man shrinking with horror from a prophetic display of his own character, and an anticipated view of his own conduct—"What, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" 2 Kings viii. 13. He viewed it then, through the calm medium of reason, humanity, and conscience; and justly reprobated, what passion and opportunity afterwards prompted him to act, without pity or remorse.

The progress of sin is like that of certain diseases, whose first symptoms give no alarm; to which a vigorous constitution bids a bold defiance, and treats with neglect; but which, through that neglect, silently fix

upon some of the nobler parts, prey unseen, unobserved upon the vitals, and the man finds himself dying, before he apprehended any danger. It was but a slight cold, a tickling cough, a small difficulty of breathing; but imperceptibly becomes an intolerable oppression, an universal weakness, an extenuating hectic, under which nature fails; the nails bend inwards, the hairs fall off, the legs swell, the eyes sink, and the cold hand of death stops the languid current at the fountain. Thus the giddy sallies of youth, the mistakes of inconsideration, the errors of inexperience, through neglect, presumption and indulgence, become, before men are aware, habits of vice, constitutional maladies, by which manhood is dishonoured, old age becomes pitiable, and death is rendered dreadful beyond expression. These considerations clearly justify and enforce the advice of the apostle; "Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," Heb. iii. 13.

If there be a history and a character, which, more powerfully than another, press this exhortation upon the conscience, it is the history and character of Balaam, the son of Bosor, "who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." We have traced his progress from Aram to Moab, and found him pertinaciously adhering to an impious purpose, with an understanding clearly informed as to his duty, and a conscience perfectly awake to his situation. It is unpleasant, but God grant it may not be unprofitable, to attend him through the remainder of his wicked and abominable course.

Balak chagrined and disappointed to hear the eulogy of Israel from those lips which he had hired to curse them, weakly hopes to change the counsels of Heaven, by changing the place of his own view: and Balaam wickedly humours his fondness and credulity. The

Moabitish prince ascribes the rapturous expressions of the prophet, to the full and distinct prospect which he had of the camp of Israel, and therefore proposes to view it from a new station, whence its extremity only was visible, in the hope that a partial survey of that glory might encourage him to blast it with a curse. He conducts him accordingly into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and another preparatory sacrifice is offered up of seven bullocks and seven rams, upon as many different altars; and the hardened wretch has the impious boldness of retiring a second time to meet God on this ungracious errand. An answer is now put into his mouth, which levels a mortal blow at the hopes of his wicked employer, and the wrath of man serves but the more illustriously to praise God. Who but must shudder to hear such words as these falling from such a tongue? "Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor: God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought! Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink of the blood of the slain," Numb. xxiii. 18—24. "Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord," Psal. cxliv. 15.

The time would fail to go into a particular detail of the events which justify this noble prediction. But

we should do it infinite injustice to restrict its meaning to one particular nation, to transitory purposes, or to temporal events. It is gloriously descriptive of the unchangeable faithfulness, the undeviating truth, the almighty protection, the immoveable love of God to his people. It speaks the blessedness of the man "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered;" the blessedness of the man "unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile," Psalm xxxii. 1, 2. It exposes the impotence of Satan, and of all the enemies of their salvation. It exhibits the final triumph of the church of God, through the great Captain of their salvation, who unites in his person, among other wonderful extremes, the character of "the Lamb slain, to take away the sins of the world," and of the "Lion of the tribe of Judah," the great Lion who lifteth up himself "and shall not lie down, until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain." And, it prefigures their last joyful encampment in the heavenly plains, where the shout of a king shall be for ever heard among them, and the glory of the Lord arise upon them, to set no more.

This decisive answer seems for a moment to have quashed the hopes of Balak, and he is now disposed to compound with the prophet for total silence. "Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all," Verse 25. But O, the obstinate perseverance of the carnal mind in a sinful course! After all he had seen and heard, he returns a third time to the charge, and dreams of another station, a repeated sacrifice, and an altered purpose. How mortifying to think that good men are so much sooner weary of well-doing, so much more easily discouraged from the pursuit of duty. But though Balaam gave directions for the building of new altars, he can no longer be the dupe of his own sinful wishes and magical arts, and therefore dares not to have recourse to them again. Such is the awful, such the glorious power of God! Magicians may for a lit-

tle while amuse themselves, and deceive others, by their enchantments; but Aaron's rod at length swallows up those of Egyptian wizards; and Balaam is at length constrained to resign his fruitless arts, and to acknowledge the finger of God from the top of Peor, where Baal was worshipped. He again surveys the tents of Israel, where Jehovah resided, and charmed, by the prospect, from his malevolent design, seems to give cordially into the views of that Spirit who spake by his mouth. "And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness. And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes, and the Spirit of God came upon him. And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: he hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the vallies are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign-aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee," Chap. xxiv. 1—9.

Our chief object at present being to illustrate the character of Balaam, and to improve it, we are to consider his prophecy chiefly in that view, abstracted from the great and glorious truth which it contains. And

we observe, first, that it behoved him now to be convinced by so many successive and corresponding revelations, of the steady, determined purpose of Heaven, in favour of Israel. In spite of all his subterfuges, after all his turnings and windings, he finds himself still brought back to the same point; a language is forced upon his tongue which his heart rejected, a glory is spread before his eyes, which excited only envy and sorrow: and this renders his after conduct more unaccountable, odious and criminal. Indeed it is a complicated transgression, containing so many circumstances of aggravation, that we should be tempted to doubt its existence, did not melancholy experience too frequently confirm the possibility of it.

We observe, secondly, that truth is not injured by being conveyed through an impure channel, and therefore ought not to be rejected on that account. Indeed it rather confers a higher lustre upon it, just as hypocrisy pays the most honourable compliment to true religion, by assuming its sacred habit and form. The word of God shall not fail of its effect, though Balaam, or though Satan speak it. It may do good to others, while he who bears it is injured, not benefited. And surely, when we hear such divine sentences coming from such unhallowed lips, a holy jealousy will be kindled, a holy watchfulness inculcated on all who bring the messages of God to others; as the great apostle of the Gentiles felt and expressed, when he says, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away," 1 Cor. ix. 27.

We are led, thirdly, to observe and to lament how rarely fine talents and ample means of doing good are in the possession of an honest, benevolent and sanctified heart! The elevation of genius too seldom aims its flight to the feet of the Father of lights, "from whom cometh down every good gift and every per-

fect;" and affluence is frequently abused, to increase that misery which it was given to relieve. But then, surely, men are likest God, when enlargement of understanding, and plenitude of power, obey the calls of goodness, and strive to diffuse more widely the gifts of an indulgent Providence; and that benevolence is the most exalted, which aims at the highest good, and seeks to promote interests that are immortal. What then must be the malignity of that heart which, in Balaam, perverted the soundest understanding, disfigured and misled the finest abilities? How dark and dismal that unfeeling passion, which scrupled not to devote a whole nation, for the sake of a little silver and gold! How greatly do men err in the estimation which they make both of their own qualities and those of others! Those of the head are the objects of universal admiration, the subject of universal praise; those of the heart are lightly esteemed, and do not always escape censure. But apply the balance of the sanctuary, and what a reverse! A little humility outweighs a great deal of learning; faith as a grain of mustard seed preponderates against a mountain of gold; and charity, though with the simplicity of a child, brings down the scale, against the wit of men, and the eloquence of angels. By all means covet earnestly the best gifts, though they fall to the lot of but a few; but rather cultivate the more precious graces which God conferreth liberally on all that ask him. Whatever you solicit, whatever you receive, see that you have the blessing which sweetens, which sanctifies, which ennobles, which improves it.

Finally, we may observe the dreadful misery of that man whose heart and head are at variance; whom inclination drags one way, and conscience another; who lives with a drawn sword continually hanging over his head by a single hair; for ever doing what he is constrained for ever to condemn; and reluctantly ready to execute the judgment of God upon himself. What

dismal and unpleasant progress must he make, who sees an angel in arms opposing him at every step, and whose way is hedged about on every side with thorns of his own planting!

Balak can now refrain no longer, but smiting together his hands, in a rage exclaims, "I called thee to curse mine enemies, and behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times: therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour," Verse 10, 11. An expostulation of no pleasant complexion ensues; for what is the friendship of bad men, but a commerce of interest, a confederacy that aims only at self; and it concludes on the part of Balaam with a prediction clearer, fuller, and more pointed than ever, of Israel's glory and Moab's downfall: "And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor, hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: he hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city. And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations, but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever. And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwelling-place, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock. Nevertheless, the Kenite shall be wasted, until Asher shall carry thee away captive. And he took up

his parable, and said, Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!" Chap xxiv. 15—23.

The burthen of this prophecy has evidently a two-fold object, the one improving upon, rising above and extending beyond the other. Its primary and nearer object, David, God's anointed king, to crush the power of the enemy, and Moab in particular, and to perfect the conquest of the promised land. Its secondary and more remote one, though first in point of importance, "Jesus, the root and offspring of David." In the one, Balak saw the death of all his earthly hopes, the approaching dominion of a hated power, established on the ruins of his own country. In the other, Balaam beheld the ruin of all his prospects beyond the grave; a light that should shine but to conduct him to the place of punishment; a Star that should arise to shed the mildest influence on others, but only to breathe pestilence and death upon himself; a Ruler who should exercise universal dominion, but who, while he presided over his willing and obedient subjects in mercy and loving kindness, should rule rebels like him with a rod of iron. Indeed if Balaam had any pre-sentiment of a Saviour when he uttered this prophecy, as is highly probable, his character is the most detestable, and his condition the most deplorable that can be imagined. Unhappy man, with one breath preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ to a guilty world, and with the next, teaching the arts of seduction to ensnare the innocent. In words exulting in the greatest blessing which God had to bestow upon mankind, but dreadfully conscious to himself that he had wilfully rejected the counsel of God against himself. With all the weight and importance of the soul and eternity before his eyes, but this world stedfastly enthroned in his heart; a prophet, yet a reprobate, descending to the grave with the blood of thousands upon his head.

The twenty-fifth chapter of Numbers contains the

history of the stumbling-block which Balaam taught Balak to cast before the children of Israel—"to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication," Rev. ii. 14, and of its dreadful success. As a prophet he could not hurt Israel; but as a politician, he unhappily prevails. He was well aware where their strength lay; and unfortunately, it appears, he had likewise discovered their weak side. Their God could not be prevailed on to withdraw his protection; but may not they be persuaded or allured to change their allegiance? This will do the work of Satan equally well. Israel was not at ease, with the promised land under their eye, and part of it already in their possession. They were flushed with recent victory, assured of divine protection, and thereby confident of farther success. A situation full of danger; for then, when our mountain seems to us to stand most strong, we are most easily liable to be moved, cast down, destroyed. Balaam accordingly, deep read as he was in the book of human nature, suggests to Balak the diabolical counsel of attempting to decoy the people into idolatry by means of female insinuation and address. The experiment is made, and fatally succeeds. And it is this counsel which stamps the character of Balaam with infamy indelible; as it exhibits a dissolution of moral principle, to be equalled only by him who is a murderer from the beginning.

Think what it is to advise a father to expose his daughter to prostitution: think what it is to devise and to encompass the death of one fellow-creature, who has never offended us: think of the malice which aims its deadly shaft, not at the body, but at the soul: think of the presumption which flies directly in the face of the great and terrible Jehovah, and defies his power: and then think of a vile wretch, recommending the prostitution of a whole nation; in cold blood plotting the destruction of myriads; and what is worse, infinitely worse than any temporal evil, re-

remorselessly involving them in guilt which threatened eternal ruin: and all this under the character of a prophet, whose office bound him to call the people away from their wickedness, and to save perishing souls from death; and all for what? “For so much trash as may be grasped thus.” Base passion, what canst thou not make us do? “Surely the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”

The history of Israel’s seduction, in consequence of Balaam’s horrid advice, falls not within our present design, and we are forbid by decency to pursue it. The guilt of this fatal defection cost no less than twenty-four thousand lives of them who died of the plague, besides those who suffered by the hands of justice. So horrid are the sacrifices which pride, ambition and covetousness, are daily offering up! So dreadful the havoc which ungoverned passion makes amongst the works of God!—But short is the triumph of the most successful villany: remorse embitters the enjoyment of it, and justice hastens to bring it to a period.

In the very first attack made upon Midian, we find Balaam in arms, supporting his pernicious council by the sword; but it cannot prosper: Midian is discomfited on the first onset, and the hoary traitor falls unpitied in the field, leaving behind him a name to be detested and despised of all generations, while one iota or one tittle of the book of God remains.

We shall have attended, however, to the history of this singular man in vain, unless we learn from it the infinite danger of being under the dominion of any one ungovernable passion; and unless we are persuaded to watch over, to resist, and to subdue, “the sin which doth so easily beset us.” Of little avail is it that our vice is not the vice which governed, ensnared and ruined Balaam, if it alienate the heart from God, dissolves the obligations of religion, disorder the understanding, and lull the conscience asleep. One disease

for another, one vice for another, is but a miserable exchange. If the patient must die, it will not alleviate one pang, that he perishes by the fever rather than the hydropsy, the consumption, or any other distemper.

The unrestrained dominion of any one sinful appetite must become fatal at length. Covetousness, pride, lust, envy, malice, revenge, are the mortal distempers of the soul, which, perhaps insensibly, but most certainly, are impairing its beauty, and wasting its strength. "Lust," whatever be its particular name, "having conceived, bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Instead, therefore, of amusing or of perplexing himself with inquiries into the general symptoms of disease, it concerns every man to study his own particular case; to watch against "the sin which doth so easily beset him;" to keep himself from *his* iniquity; to discover, and to rectify the disorder of his own constitution, "the plague of his own heart." That where he is naturally, or by habit, weak, he may become strong, "through the grace that is in Christ."

Let us be instructed to value qualities, whether natural or acquired, not from their currency and estimation in the world, but from their appearance in the sight of God. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts," Isa. lv. 9. "By him actions are weighed." By his judgment we must stand or fall. Has Heaven blessed thee, O man, with extraordinary gifts? Let it be a motive to humility, not a source of pride. It is a trust of which thou must render an account; and "to whom men have committed much, of him they will require the more." If he who buries his one talent in the ground be criminal, what shall become of that man who dissipates and destroys ten in riotous living?

There is but one road to a happy end—a holy life. There is but one ground of hope, in death, to a guilty creature—the mercy of God through a Redeemer.

Abraham saw the Saviour's day afar off, believed and rejoiced. Balaam saw it afar off, persisted in impenitence and unbelief, and died without hope. On the one, "the Star of Jacob" darted a mild and healthful influence, which cheered the path of life, and dispelled the horrors of the grave. On the other it shot a baleful fire which drunk up the spirits, blasted present enjoyment, and increased the gloom of futurity—Arise, O star of Jacob, arise upon my head with healing in thy wings! Let me walk in thy light; let me "hasten to the brightness of thy rising!" Christian, "arise, shine: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2. "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory," Col. iii. 3, 4.

END OF VOLUME II.

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